



STOP PHASE 3

SELL-OUT

Last Wednesday's meeting of top trade union bureaucrats served only one purpose — to add the seal of the entire trade union bureaucracy to the treacherous manoeuvres in which the TUC has been engaged over the past week.

The Tory Government, on behalf of the entire ruling class, is masterminding a ruthless attack on working class living standards and organisation — Phase 3, the Shrewsbury trials, the 3-day week. But these so-called 'leaders' of the trade union movement can think of only one answer — retreat.

By CHRIS BALFOUR

These men have the power to throw the entire weight of the most powerful working class movement in the world against a Government whose policies are attacking the living standards of the vast majority of the population.

Instead of using this power, they choose to try and woo the Tory Government with sweet talk and half-baked concessions. But the Tories are not fools — they will only settle for a firm guarantee that the TUC will underwrite Phase 3.

The TUC, having placed itself on the slippery slope of compromise will be inclined to go further. Having rejected the opportunity to lead the working class movement forward, it has left itself with little alternative but to retreat even further. Already Scanlon is assuring the Tories that the national engineering claim is not a challenge to Phase 3.

A massive movement of protest — a flood of resolutions from all trade union bodies, mass rallies, stoppages and lobbies — must be organised against a TUC sell-out over Phase 3.

Every trade unionist concerned with defending the living standards of himself and his fellow workers must demand that the TUC break off all talks with the Government, and backs the miners with the weapon that can most effectively unite the working class and most readily defeat the Tories — a general strike to bring down the Government.

Only a massive working-class counter-offensive can prevent further ruling class attacks and more treachery on the part of the bureaucrats. The organisation of such an offensive must now be the central concern of rank-and-file militants. This means:

1. Organise strike action against Phase Three: in particular campaign for a national strike by the miners, engineers and railmen.
2. For a fighting alliance against Phase Three: in particular, co-ordinated action by the miners, engineers, and railmen.
3. Defend the Shrewsbury workers: for a national building strike and mass industrial solidarity action to free the 3, reverse the verdicts and end the trials.
4. Make the bosses bear the cost of the three-day week: no wage reductions or redundancies because of the Tory lockout.

The final manoeuvre which the Tory Government will resort to in order to disorient the workers' movement will be a snap general election. Here again the union bureaucrats will prove the Tories' best friends by calling for an end to all industrial action until after the election.

Such a move would be worth millions of votes for the Tories, because it would allow them to pose as 'masters of the situation' — something which would be impossible if the election were to take place while the whole country was laid-off two days a week

and industrial struggles were on the upsurge.

The way to defeat the Tories at the polls is by *stepping-up* industrial action. Mick McGahey, Scottish miners' President, told the Scottish NUM delegate conference on Monday that the miners should intensify their overtime ban during an election to give them more time to work for the defeat of the Tories. Far better would be a *national miners' strike* and the dispatch of flying pickets to organise mass anti-Tory demonstrations around the country. Let the outcome of the next general election be decided at the factory gates and in the streets — where the workers' movement has power!

Central to all the tasks facing the trade union movement in the weeks ahead is the construction of *Councils of Action*, representative of the whole labour movement, in every locality. Such bodies could organise maximum support for the campaign against the TUC sell-out, build mass support for the Shrewsbury militants, provide local coordination of the struggle against the crisis, and launch a campaign of industrial and mass action against the Government in the event of an election.

Through such activities these bodies would establish deep roots in the workers' struggles and, if nationally coordinated, would become a power against which no Government and no trade union bureaucrat could stand.

SHREWSBURY CONFERENCE RECALLED

The Liverpool Trades Council has recalled the Shrewsbury Conference which first met last September, attended by over 600 trade union delegates, to plan the extension of the campaign against the Shrewsbury trials and the jailing of three working class militants. The Conference will meet on Saturday, 2 February in St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials and further information can be obtained from: Simon Fraser, LTC Secretary, 33 Hatton Gardens, Liverpool 3 (tel: 051-236-1778).

The following is a statement from the International Marxist Group on this crucial conference:

On 2 February delegates from all over Britain will meet in Liverpool to discuss the line of action needed to free the Shrewsbury 3 and defend the other militants on trial. Every trade union branch, and every Shrewsbury defence committee must make an all-out effort to win support for this conference. Site and factory meetings must be held, and delegates elected from workplaces, docks, trade union branches, and defence committees. But we must learn from the experience of the Shrewsbury campaign so far.

We must ensure that the decisions of this conference have a real meaning in the labour movement. There have been enough petitions and resolutions to form a paper chain from Clydeside to Downing Street. From now on there must be no more protests which waste energy and achieve nothing. No restricting the campaign to 'pressure' on the trade union leaderships: they are a millstone around the workers' necks, and we must

not tie the campaign to them. There must be an all-out, 100%, commitment to industrial action.

We must kill stone dead any attempts to split Shrewsbury away from the other attacks on the working class. The Shrewsbury campaign must become the fulcrum which will turn the full weight of the labour movement against the Tory government — the source of all these attacks.

We must cut across the confusion created by those who, like the Communist Party, want to parcel up separately the response to each attack. This creates a situation in which no section of the class is clear on the action required or on how to win support from other sections if they do act. This strengthens the hand of those in the trade union leaderships who are preparing to throw over all the victories won so far by workers in the fight against the Tories.

The Birmingham UCATT shop stewards have given the lead. They passed a resolution calling for an indefinite strike in the building trade until the 3 were freed and the charges dropped. Every trade unionist and every delegate at the Liverpool conference must be won to support for a resolution along the following lines.

1. This conference calls for industrial action by all workers, during the appeals, to free the Shrewsbury 3, reverse the convictions, and stop the trials.
2. It supports all moves towards indefinite strike action in the building trade.
3. In the event of an indefinite national building strike the conference calls for



Photo: Peter Harrap (Report)

TUC General Secretary Len Murray (centre) at Wednesday's meeting of trade union leaders. This meeting made it perfectly clear that the bureaucrats cannot lead the movement forward in the fight against the Tory Government. Rank-and-file militants must organise through Councils of Action in every area to take the leadership of the struggle and launch a working class counter-offensive against the Tory attacks.

ERNEST MANDEL

a leading member of the Fourth International speaks on



'CAPITALIST CRISIS OR WORKERS' POWER'

7.30 pm — Wednesday 23 January — St Pancras Assembly Rooms, Camden Town Hall (opposite St Pancras station)

Shrewsbury – New trial starts as strike action discussed

London demo demands stand by M.P.s



On the march in London in defence of the Shrewsbury workers – task now is to mobilise from this for Liverpool recall conference

The London Trades Council demonstration on Tuesday ended with a lobby of Parliament, where building workers were addressed by Labour MPs including Norman Atkinson, Frank Allaun, Sid Bidwell, and Will Hamtya.

possibility of a general election and concluded by saying he didn't think there would be one. He then repeated the main outlines of the Labour Party manifesto, and declared that a Labour Government would return to free collective bargaining. He did not mention voluntary incomes policy.

His speech was repeatedly interrupted from the floor by speakers who wanted to know what he was going to do about the Shrewsbury victims. Atkinson told the meeting that Labour law officers were busy looking at ways of dealing with the House of Lords' recent ruling which overturned the right of pickets to stop lorries and to persuade drivers not to cross the picket line; and that others were working on ways of stopping the Conspiracy Act of 1875 from being used against the unions.

The meeting felt that all this was very useful, but why hadn't Labour MPs used the House of Commons to mobilise interest and support for the issue? After all, as one representative of the London Defence Committee put it, they would not free anyone just by reconsidering laws. The only way was to take strike action of general strike proportions.

Atkinson replied that to raise it in the House would put them in contempt. The matter was sub judice. But as another speaker pointed out, if the Labour MPs really agreed that it was so important to force the Government's hand over Shrewsbury, why didn't they challenge the laws of contempt?

The meeting ended with assurances from Atkinson that they would keep in touch with the developments in the Shrewsbury trials. But people had to understand that as MPs they were severely constrained from doing anything more.

NATIONAL STRIKE BY BUILDING WORKERS CAN MOBILISE REST OF CLASS

Thousands of building workers in Edinburgh, London, Liverpool, Glasgow and several other smaller centres, struck on Tuesday to demand the release of the Shrewsbury Three. The T&G made the one-day stoppage official—the first time that the trade union leadership has given official support to the Shrewsbury movement.

Tuesday's action must mark a turning point in the campaign to free the Three and bring an end to the trials of the Shrewsbury 24. Speakers on platforms up and down the country made the parallel between the Pentonville 5 and the Shrewsbury 3. In London, Lou Lewis, London building workers leader, said: 'When the five dockers were jailed, the response of the TUC was to call a general strike... the jailings at Shrewsbury of the three building workers is a similar attack.'

Bob Gordon, convenor of the Thamesmead site, told *Red Weekly*: 'The law courts have been established to maintain the rule of law of the capitalist class and it is unlikely that the matter will be resolved by the law courts. It will only be resolved in the same way that the matter of the Pentonville 5 was resolved—by mass industrial action. That's my view and the view of the works' committee.'

depend on the UCATT or T&G executives to call for a national building strike. The Birmingham area council endorse their initiative. If successful, this should help open the way for building workers all over the country to follow and build a national strike.

Speaking to *Red Weekly*, Mike Hollahan, of the East London Defence Committee, and a branch official of the CEU, said of the Birmingham initiative: 'We would welcome this in London, because London is very poorly organised from the building workers' point of view. Nevertheless, as in the building workers' strike, I think support would be expressed—if the campaign is got off the ground and the snow-balling effect occurs.'

SUPPORT FOR BUILDING WORKERS

A national building workers' strike will provide the first step to the sort of action which can free the Three. Building workers will not be isolated if they step forward. This was evident from the support for Tuesday's action from

other groups of workers. In Liverpool, for example, the local Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions supported the demonstration of 2000 workers, and held a mass meeting of engineering workers in Liverpool stadium on Shrewsbury.

In Edinburgh, pits factories and building sites along the entire east coast of Scotland were represented on the demonstration to Leith Town Hall, and the Scottish Executive of the NUM was also represented. Flying pickets of striking building workers could bring out workers from all these trade union bodies in their support.

Against this background, the recall meeting of the Liverpool Trades Council on Shrewsbury on 2 February could be a body which does more than pass resolutions and make declarations. It could get down to the real business of planning a movement which can free the Three, put an end to the trials, and provide a rallying point around which the rest of the working class can unite in action to bring down the Tory Government.

SECOND TRIAL OPENS WITH MORE TALK OF 'TERROR SQUADS'

While the stoppages and demonstrations over the jailing of the pickets were taking place, the second stage of the trials opened at Shrewsbury Crown Court on Monday. A small demonstration was held outside to express support for the second eight of the Shrewsbury 24.

The Eight heard the prosecution open the trial with almost exactly the same speech which inaugurated the trial of the first Six. The Court was told how there were 'terrifying scenes of violence and intimidation' when 300 pickets 'swarmed across' a housing site at Shrewsbury 'leaving a trail of damage and shouting abuse and threats'. What happened 'went far beyond peaceful picketing'.

The Eight are some of the men led by the imprisoned Three, Dennis Warren, Eric Tomlinson and John Jones, when they picketed lump building sites in Shrewsbury during the building workers' strike of 1972. For playing this organising role, the Three were convicted of conspiracy. The Eight are not on conspiracy charges, but face charges of unlawful assembly, fighting, and making an affray.

In the first trial, the jury heard some astonishing stories. Lump workers stood up in court and told how they had thrown stones at pickets, intimidated them, and wished they could have run over them with vehicles. The court heard one site foreman tell how he threatened pickets with a shotgun. None of these people were ever brought to trial.

VIOLENCE AGAINST STRIKES

Hopefully, the defence will bring this evidence to bear on the trial of the Eight. For it illustrates that, even if any of the Eight used violence, the other side involved in the struggle used it too. What took place at Shrewsbury simply illustrates that the struggle between working class and the capitalist class and its effective allies involves the use of force. In fact, the employers had even prepared anti-picket squads to use against the strikers.

Terry Barratt, chairman of the Barking and Dagenham Defence Committee, placed this issue in its wider context. He told *Red Weekly* on Tuesday:

Coventry Central UCATT Branch calls for strike action

'This branch supports the call of the Birmingham shop stewards committee for an indefinite national strike of the building trade, as the only way to free the Shrewsbury 3 and defend the right to picket.'

To this end we:
— call a mass meeting on 1 February of all building trade workers, to discuss the call for a strike; invite the trades council, shop stewards committees, trade union branches, and other organisations to send delegates or motions of support to this meeting; and call on all working class organisations to give full support to the Shrewsbury 3, and to send donations to the dependants and Defence Committee.

'Further the branch calls on the Trades Council to support the above motion and to set up a Shrewsbury sub-committee to publicise and win support for the Shrewsbury case.'

'I dislike intensely the expression 'Three', because there are 24 members of the working class who have been charged with fictitious crimes. I think if we are going to free the Shrewsbury 24 we must have a policy with regard to the capitalist system.'

'I agree with the parties of the Left saying we should get rid of the Tories. This is only the first move towards getting on the real road to socialism—not the British Road, with peaceful persuasion, because to my knowledge there has never been a case of the peaceful road to socialism. I think the only road to socialism, British or otherwise, will be by revolutionary means.'

'We must be determined to bring about really highly organised Councils of Action... With these I think we could unite the most militant sections of trade unions. When we have done this, we must outline our plans to have forces ready to combat units like the Special Patrol Groups, and also explain that Heathrow was not just a rehearsal, not just people playing soldiers, it was a process of conditioning.'

MASS INDUSTRIAL ACTION

A movement like that which freed the Pentonville 5 will only come about as a result of one or more sections of workers giving a lead. The most logical group for this role are the building workers. Last week, Birmingham UCATT shop stewards called for a national building strike and pledged to begin this in the Birmingham area. On 21 January, there will be a mass meeting of all Birmingham workers at which the motion for an indefinite stoppage will be put.

Now, on 3 February, there is to be a meeting of all officials, convenors and shop stewards of every union in the Birmingham district. This meeting will give the trade union movement in Birmingham an ideal opportunity to endorse the initiative in the building trade and set an example by planning a campaign of initial supporting action in other industries. In all, Birmingham provides a model of how to go forward. The UCATT executive has agreed to endorse action taken by the regional councils, but we should not

Only rank-and-file initiative can reverse engineers' pay sabotage

For many weeks *Red Weekly* has been stressing the need for an alliance between the miners and the engineers to give the rest of the working class a lead in the fight against Phase 3. Such a massive force thrown against the Government would undoubtedly settle the struggle over Phase 3 once and for all, and could lead to the kind of industrial action which would threaten the very existence of the Tory Government.

On 3 January the recall National Committee of the AUEW had an excellent opportunity to make this unity a reality by calling a national engineering strike and making approaches to the NUM for a joint struggle.

Instead, what they decided was the worst of all possible decisions that could have been made - to call an overtime ban when the three day week is over. In other words, far from forging any unity with the miners, the National Committee have deliberately decided to do nothing until the miners' struggle is over.

NATIONAL STRIKE

Quite apart from the fact that it splits up the struggles of the engineers and the miners, an overtime ban in the engineering industry has never been a serious contender as a tactic which can win the claim. The effect of an overtime ban would be to hit some firms fairly hard and others hardly at all, while the employers would centralise their resources to minimise the effect. It would also split the workers right down the middle. Pieceworkers would have the opportunity to make up some of their lost earnings by stepping up production while day workers, generally the lowest paid, would have no such opportunity and would feel that they were carrying the can.

The idea of local strikes is equally disastrous, as the struggles over the 1972 claim showed. The chances of localised struggles succeeding against such a powerful organisation as the Engineering Employers' Federation are remote to say the least.

If the Executive Council of the AUEW were serious about smashing Phase 3 then they should have been campaigning in the membership for the only action that could possibly win the claim - an all-out national strike. Local and national conferences of shop stewards should

have been held long ago to prepare the struggle. Mass meetings should have been held in every factory and strike committees elected in every area. Instead we have had 200,000 leaflets for over a million members.

STRIKE BALLOT

As well as the proposal for the overtime ban there was a move to hold a ballot of the membership on the question of a national strike. It is important for militants to be clear on this question since there has been a great deal of confusion spread, not least by the CP, concerning the need for a ballot. The rule book does not state that a ballot is necessary for a national strike. The National Committee more or less have the power to do what they like, including calling a national strike. Since the crucial question is not whether there is a ballot but whether there is a strike, the NC should have used its power to call a strike on 3 January.

As far as union democracy is concerned, it should be made clear that a ballot is not a democratic way of deciding on a form of struggle. In a ballot the membership vote as isolated individuals without having had the opportunity to be involved in a real discussion on the way forward. Almost the sole pressure on them is propaganda poured out by the capitalist media. If any of the bureaucrats in the AUEW are really concerned about democracy then they should be campaigning for discussions and votes to be taken at mass meetings organised by shop stewards committees. These mass meetings should also be used to allow the rank and file to organise to conduct the struggle themselves. If the Executive Council had been campaigning in this way for a national strike since the claim was adopted by the NC, the confidence of the mass of the engineering workers to take on the Government would have been much greater than it is today. But no doubt the bureaucrats who sit in offices boasting about 'our democratic rule book' would think that this was taking democracy a bit too far!

RECALL CONVENORS' CONFERENCE

The problem for militants whose hopes have been dashed by the NC's decision is what is to be done now. The Executive Council should be flooded with resolutions condemning the decision and demanding that the NC be recalled

immediately to reverse it. But these bureaucrats will not be moved by resolutions alone. The main aim of militants must be to initiate industrial action independently of the official leadership. Only if this is done will the Executive Council be forced to act.

The conference of convenors which was held last month should be immediately recalled by those who sponsored it. Every shop stewards committee should pass resolutions to this effect. If those people do not recall the conference then as many of the major shop stewards committees as possible should jointly organise a conference themselves. The conference should condemn the NC's decision and call a national strike and organise it by electing a strike committee and holding mass meetings in all the major engineering centres. Local strike committees should be elected to organise the struggle in the localities. Only if this kind of action is initiated by the rank and file will there be any hope of the NC being recalled.

Last month's conference called upon the NC to give 'a positive lead on industrial action up to and including a national stoppage'. Nothing can be less positive than a decision to do nothing until the miners' struggle is over. What are the sponsors of the conference going to do now? Since most of them are in the Communist Party they are in a real dilemma. The *Morning Star* has been calling for a united effort against Phase 3 and for a recall TUC to organise the whole trades union movement for a struggle against the Tories. What, then, will the CP say about Scanlon and Co's sabotage of the unity of the working class?

All the signs are that the CP is using the 3-day week as a diversion from the struggle over the national claim. If the engineers find themselves mainly preoccupied with defensive struggles against the 3-day week this will be a setback for the whole working class's offensive against the Tories. Are the CP militants going to continually back-track in order to cover up for Scanlon's betrayals, or will they denounce the decision of the NC and fight for a national strike against Scanlon? How they answer that question could be vital for the outcome of the present confrontation between the working class and the Tory Government.

TERRY CRAWFORD



Hugh Scanlon and lobbyist at Wednesday's meeting of union leaders. A confrontation that sums up the two roads facing the workers' movement: Scanlon's road of compromise and retreat, or the road of all-out struggle against the Tory attacks - towards a general strike.

For engineering militants the key task is to work for a national engineering strike. The only alternative to this is the 'Scanlon Trap', a national settlement within Phase 3, and local militants left to go it alone against the combined might of the EEF and the Government.

SCANLON PHASE 3 STATEMENT NOT JUST ANOTHER 'MISTAKE'

'Our problem is to get an offer to the limit of Phase 3, not to break it.' These were the words of Hugh Scanlon, speaking on TV last weekend.

On Tuesday, once again on TV, he went on to clarify this statement. According to Scanlon, the national engineering claim just happens 'fortuitously' to fall within Phase 3 - the problem of breaking through Phase 3 is therefore the concern of local bargaining.

This is not even a half-truth. First of all, the national claim can only be interpreted as being within Phase 3 if nothing but the demand for a £35 basic wage is taken into account. Once the other national demands - for a 35-hour week, 4 weeks' holiday, and equal pay for women - are included, the claim smashes right through Phase 3. Is Scanlon publicly saying that these demands have now been dropped from the engineering claim?

Moreover, the basic wage claim can only fall within Phase 3 because many engineering workers are already earning well above the basic. If further local increases are not forthcoming these workers will get nothing at all out of an increase in the national basic rate.

Is Scanlon's statement an open declaration to the employers and the Tory Government that these workers will receive no backing from the union in the fight against Phase 3? Certainly the local employers will have the combined force of the Engineering Employers' Federation and the Tory Government standing behind them. Such a declaration would thus be nothing less than outright sabotage of the fight for better wages and conditions in the engineering industry.

SCANLON MUST EXPLAIN

Every militant must demand that Scanlon explain this statement. Every branch,

shop stewards committee, District Committee etc, should send resolutions to the Executive Council demanding that the statement be retracted and that a statement be issued saying that there will be no retreat on the full claim. Demands should be made that Scanlon attend shop stewards quarterlies to give an explanation of this latest stab in the back to the membership.

But this kind of retreat before the Tories is not really out of character for Scanlon. Ever since he was elected to the office of President of the AUEW he has given the membership a clear lead on nothing. The 1972 wages claim was simply thrown back into the laps of the membership. Nothing was done to fight the fines imposed on the union by the NIRC except to send a circular round saying do your own thing. Even the miserable one-day protest stoppage did not come from Scanlon's initiative.

When he does make a positive intervention he does not exactly cover himself with glory. He ended up siding with the management during the Ford's strike and sanctioned mass scabbing during last year's electricians' dispute at Chrysler's. His talk a few months ago of amendments to the Industrial Relations Act, his support of the TUC-Government talks, and now his apparent acquiescence in the Tory pay laws should make it clear to militants that Scanlon is not someone who can be depended upon to organise a real struggle against the Tory Government.

And what will our friends in the Communist Party have to say about all this? For years the CP has been telling us that Scanlon is not only a left-wing progressive and excellent trades unionist but is actually instrumental in winning the fight for socialism. This has caused them a few headaches when Scanlon has done things

like support the TUC-Government talks while the CP is denouncing them as a 'crime and a scandal'. Now it looks as if they will get another headache from Scanlon's remarks about limiting the engineers' pay claim to Phase 3.

ASPIRIN THREAT TO CP

But there is a real danger that they will run out of aspirins. Last Tuesday's *Morning Star* quite correctly denounced the TUC offer to Heath to accept Phase 3 if only he would make an exception of the miners as 'playing his game'. And who should we find among the villains 'playing Heath's game'? - 'left-wing progressive' Hugh Scanlon!

National Front mobilises for anti-Common Market demo

The Council of Anti-Common Market Organisations, an umbrella group of the extreme right, has called a demonstration this Saturday (19 January), and fascists of the National Front have declared their support.

However, apart from the political leanings of its sponsors, prominent amongst whom are Air Vice Marshall D. Bennet and the Rev. Hood (sic!), there is no indication of the political complexion of the demo or the involvement of the NF. In addition reformists in the labour movement have presented their opposition to the EEC in remarkably similar terms - defence of national sovereignty, democracy, and parliament, although this demo adds 'allegiance to the Crown'. There is a distinct danger, therefore, that some workers may be hoodwinked into supporting it.

In the context of the turn of the National Front towards the working class, this demonstration could be particularly dangerous. The latest issue of their monthly magazine *Spearhead* comes out in support of the miners and against the pay laws. Combined with a demonstration which attacks rising prices through opposition to the EEC, this could be quite attractive to some trade unionists.

Of course, the NF is only taking up such

issues in order to build a movement with mass backing in order to destroy the trade union movement. In the present crisis such a movement could prove extremely useful to the bourgeoisie.

Saturday's demo also highlights the growing accord between the NF and Air Vice Marshall Donald 'Pathfinder' Bennet. 'Pathfinder', who is a leader of the 'Political Freedom Movement' and a past activist in other right-wing formations, has launched a fund to finance a new right-wing party at the next general election. He is aiming at £1 million, and has amassed a fair amount already.

TERRY CRAWFORD

It is important to point out to the working class movement the growing links between the fascists and the extreme right. Despite the fact that the Front's current tactic is to deny its fascist aspirations, a strenuous local campaign during the Brighton and Hove by-election pinned the fascist label firmly on the NF. This put the Front on the defensive. The pressure must be kept up, and a picket has been called when Saturday's demonstration is assembling, for the purpose of exposing the fascists. It will take place at 4.30 pm at Speakers' Corner, (Marble Arch), this Saturday, 19 January.

YUGOSLAV STUDENTS THREATEN STRIKE AGAINST REPRESSION

A dramatic challenge to the new repressive turn of the Yugoslav bureaucracy has erupted with the decision by Belgrade University students to go on strike if ten of their lecturers are dismissed.

In the next few days things may well come to a head, since on Tuesday a meeting of the University's assembly ordered their expulsion from the philosophy faculty where they teach.

The strike decision was part of a six-point resolution adopted unanimously by nearly 800 students in a closed meeting of the philosophy faculty at the end of last month. Defending their lecturers—who have all taken a critical stand on recent economic and political developments in Yugoslavia—the students also attacked the motor and the president of the Yugoslav League of Communists (YLC) at the University for going 'false information' about the philosophy faculty, and accused Belgrade press and television of 'falsely and maliciously' informing the public about the situation.

'THE LETTER'

This development is just the latest in a series of confrontations which go back to the publication in September 1971 of what is now known as 'The Letter'—a directive by Tito and the Executive Committee of the YLC which outlined a new turn in economic policy and, more explicitly, in the entire political and cultural life of the country. Its basic premise was the re-introduction of the Party as the sole arbiter, and it marked the end of an era dominated by the relatively unfettered growth of market forces, the rise of new provincial centres of economic and political power, a sharp increase in social differentiation, the growth of nationalism, and the emergence of left and right oppositions to the ruling bureaucracy. The second half of the 1960s had been a period of unprecedented cultural and political ferment; the publication of 'The Letter' clearly put an end to this process.

The publication of 'The Letter' also coincided with the introduction of a policy which aimed to solve the acute economic crisis at the expense of the working class. Not only was a 10% wage cut imposed, but a high rate of inflation has further worsened a position which was already considerably depressed as a result of high unemployment and emigration abroad.

The mini-Cultural Revolution that is now sweeping the country—the propaganda emphasising the 'mass line' and the 'class question', and declaring that 'there is nothing more left than the YLC'—represents a closing of the ranks against any possibility of an articulated working class response to this situation. Similarly, the definite shift towards Moscow in the last period represents not only disillusionment with the inability of the West—and particularly the Common Market—to deliver the goods now that a recession is on the agenda, but also a form of insurance policy against possible internal unrest.

ATTACKS ON 'NEW LEFT'

Shortly after the publication of 'The Letter' there also came the first attacks on the 'new left' at a meeting of the Presidium of the YLC. One of the accusations against the Serbian Party leaders ousted in January 1972 was that they were too soft on this new left, whose two main centres are the philosophy faculty of Belgrade University with its journal *Filosofija*, and the Zagreb philosophical journal *Praxis*.

In the last few years both these journals have published a number of articles dealing critically with the economic and political situation in Yugoslavia today. They have also



London picket in defence of students jailed in 1972

protested rigorously against the growing repression. As a result, they have repeatedly been banned, and a massive attack has been orchestrated against them both within the YLC and in the press.

These attacks have increased in intensity over the past few months, provoking a considerable response among students in Zagreb as well as in Belgrade. Recently, after a particularly violent attack on *Praxis* by the Central Committee of the Croatian party, which accused the editorial board of being a tendency inside the YLC opposed to the development of socialism in Yugoslavia, the students of the philosophy faculty at Zagreb University held an extraordinary general meeting declaring support for their lecturers (who are on the journal's editorial board). They also declared their solidarity with the lecturers at the philosophy faculty in Belgrade.

The official Student Union at Zagreb immediately responded to this development by dissolving the student leadership of the faculty, and attacking their 'anarchism and leftism'. Given that the attack on Zagreb students and lecturers is taking place at a time when university boards are being cleansed of traditional forms of student participation, the solidarity

between students and lecturers is likely to be strengthened. However, it is *Filosofija* and the students and staff of the philosophy faculty of Belgrade University that have for some time now been seen as the most painful thorn in the side of the new hard-liners. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, because Belgrade was the centre of the most politically advanced and extensive student revolt, with the philosophy students playing a leading role. Secondly, because the faculty has produced some of the most serious critics of the Yugoslav bureaucracy. Indeed, in 1972 three students were brought to trial charged with Trotskyism, and given prison sentences. Thirdly, because the faculty has distinguished itself by a serious effort to understand precisely the connection between the 'Yugoslav road to socialism' and the past debates inside the international working-class movements.

Last December, following high-level pressure—including from Tito himself—the leadership of the University party branch called for the dismissal of the ten lecturers on the grounds that their political positions make them unfit to teach. (In fact, universities throughout the country are now being forced to adopt a code of 'political and moral suitability' in the election of staff, a practice introduced in Czechoslovakia after the Soviet invasion). But the intellectuals under attack have become something of a rallying point for their courageous stand against bureaucratic pressure. The bureaucracy is clearly frightened by the prospect of massive student mobilisations in support of the ten lecturers, and has so far held back from direct intervention. It has contented itself on the one hand with an increasingly slanderous propaganda campaign, and on the other with pressure on the philosophy faculty itself to do the dirty work through 'normal channels'.

1974 will be a year of regional party congresses throughout the country linked to the preparation of the YLC National Congress—only the sixth since the War. There is little doubt that the Congress will rubber-stamp the orientation of 'The Letter'. This will certainly result in renewed pressure on left wing oppositional forces. Solidarity with the Yugoslav Marxists under attack is now more urgent than ever. In particular, if the ten Belgrade lecturers are in fact dismissed, revolutionary Marxists must ensure that there is a response internationally, as there certainly will be in Yugoslavia itself. JANET SUTTLE

25,000 communists in India's jails

No fewer than 25,000 communist revolutionaries, belonging to many different groups, now pack India's prisons in one of the less publicised aspects of the situation there.

A good number of these prisoners have been interned since 1964. Once charged with an offence, prisoners are held without trial indefinitely. Even those who are put on trial find that the hearings are nothing more than a farce, and it is only rarely that the accused are acquitted. They are given liberty to be arrested within the confines of the courtroom on new, fabricated charges.

Another way in which the cases are dealt with by the government is illustrated by the case of Asok Das. Faced with a murder charge, he wrote to his lawyer asking his services in the trial. The prison officials took 43 days to deliver the letter. Meanwhile, Das was sentenced to death by the court.

Conditions in the prisons—which are overcrowded even by the government's admission—are reminiscent of the 18th century. The poor food supplied by corrupt contractors with whom prison officials collude, the shocking sanitary conditions, and the meagre medical services make life in Indian prisons almost impossible. It is not surprising that there have been frequent clashes in prison between young communist revolutionaries and the guards. Scores of prisoners die in such clashes every year—the government invariably claims that there was an attempt at mass escape and that force, including firearms, had to be used to quell the revolt.

Outside prison, the government also has its own methods of getting even with the young revolutionaries. In Calcutta, for example, where the urban guerrilla campaign reached its climax in 1970, police in plainclothes equipped with walkie-talkies and small arms regularly stalked the slum jungles of the city, drawing the communist revolutionaries into gun battles to kill them. Clashes between criminal gangs and communist revolutionaries, engineered by the police, were made to look like clashes between rival political groups. Supplied with superior fire power, the criminals succeeded in liquidating the revolutionaries in a planned, systematic manner.

In the countryside, where a higher form of struggle developed, different methods were used. In the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, the movement reached the stage of guerrilla resistance to the police in 1970. The revolutionaries claimed that 'red power' had emerged in hundreds of villages over a 600 square mile area. The response of the police was to execute summarily every leader who fell into their hands, claiming that they had been killed in armed encounters.

Physical torture, sometimes resulting in death, is used on those believed to have information useful to the police. Psychological pressure is reserved for politically mature cadres who will not yield to normal methods of torture. Thus a death sentence on Nageshan Patnaik, a 38 year-old who refused to plead on a charge of taking part in the execution of a landlord, has been held over him for three years in an attempt to break him. But he remains unyielding. As he wrote to a friend recently: 'They can afford to destroy me physically. But they can never destroy my belief.'

The crowded state of India's prisons provides dramatic evidence that this courageous outlook is shared by thousands of other revolutionaries today. But that should be no cause for complacency.

MOHAN RAM

Appeal for prisoners

Over 40 years ago, the British rulers tried to strangle the Indian communist movement in its infancy by instituting the Cawnpore and Meerut conspiracy trials. Today, India's ruling classes resort to the same conspiracy provisions of the obsolete colonial law as part of their offensive against the revolutionary forces.

The Parvatipuram conspiracy case, a trial of national significance, has just begun in Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. Implicated in it are 68 prominent communist revolutionaries and they are charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government through armed struggle.

The case relates to the Srikakulam peasant struggle of 1968/70. In Srikakulam, people participated in a large measure in the struggle against feudal oppression and landlord exploitation. The struggle resulted in a programme of land redistribution and the emergence of 'red power' over a contiguous 600 square mile area in a string of liberated villages.

The ruling classes retaliated with fascist methods. Large tracts of the Srikakulam area were declared 'disturbed' areas to suspend the applicability of normal laws and legal procedures there. Thousands of people were herded into concentration camps or regrouped in Vietnam-type strategic hamlets. Unarmed people were shot down. Crops were burnt and women were raped by the police.

Hundreds of leaders and functionaries of the communist revolutionary movement have been rotting in prison without trial for over three years. The trial has at long last begun, but it will drag on for a few years. The prosecution has cited a record number of witnesses—1,024 of them; and produced a mountain of evidence on paper—19 volumes of printed material, and 2,500 pages of mimeographed material.

To meet this onslaught on the revolutionary forces, the Andhra Pradesh Communist Committee (Revolutionaries) has set up a committee to help the defence in the Parvatipuram conspiracy case trial. The committee needs your political and financial help, which can be sent to 'Indian Appeal', c/o Red Weekly, 182 Pentonville Road, London N1. All donations will be acknowledged.

INDOCHINA NOTES

VIETNAM

President Thieu comes out fighting

President Thieu of South Vietnam has finally scrapped the Paris ceasefire agreement completely, and ordered his army to carry out open attacks on the zones controlled by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. In doing so, he has of course only legitimised the activity of the last few months; but the openness of his latest statement reflects the increasing opposition and disobedience he is facing in the army and the urban areas, which can only be stemmed by applying the kind of repression supposedly justified by a war mobilisation. There is no doubt, too, that this move also reflects growing unease at the thought of what the Tet period (from 23 January) may bring this year.

The rapid erosion of Thieu's power and the steps he is taking to hang on to it make the release of the political prisoners in his jails agreed to in principle on 4 January more uncertain. Hence it is doubly important that the demand for the release of the prisoners should not be dropped by supporters of the Vietnamese revolution. On this and other questions their active solidarity may well be increasingly required in the months to come.

CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh surrounded by Red Khmers

For three weeks now, gunners of the National United Front of Cambodia have been shelling and firing rockets into the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, with great accuracy. Near misses have been recorded on the British, Australian and Russian embassies, the Treasury and Ministry of Information, and the General Staff Headquarters; while a direct hit was

scored on the home of the US Air Attache. Lon Nol's palace, the airport of Pochentong (the only other link with the outside world apart from the Mekong River) and various military complexes have also been under heavy fire. Red Khmer units are now in firm possession of the villages and towns on the southern perimeter of Phnom Penh.

This is the first time that such a concentrated attack has been launched on the capital. The Red Khmers have always been inhibited from striking heavily at the capital by their unwillingness to harm the thousands of workers in the city and the refugees in the camps. However, the growing dissatisfaction inside the Cambodian army—shown by the frequent attempts on the lives of Government ministers by soldiers and airmen, and the grenade attacks on markets and cinemas by soldiers protesting against rising prices and the black market—coupled with the organisation and active work of Red Khmer cadres in the city itself (before each bombardment they leaflet the target areas, warning people to stay away), have produced the conditions whereby a systematic attack on Phnom Penh can be developed with little fear of injuring their comrades and allies.

THAILAND

Regime gets helping hand from China

Not content with arming the reactionary batches of Pakistan and Ceylon, China has now concluded an agreement with Thailand which guarantees greater trade between the two countries, the supply of Chinese oil to Thailand, and non-interference by China into the 'internal affairs' of Thailand. The terms of this contract closely follow those laid down in the agreement with President Marcos of the Philippines in

The proposals for military disengagement in the Middle East drawn up by US Secretary of State Kissinger, agreed with Israel last weekend, and now being discussed by the Egyptians, have been hailed on all sides as a 'breakthrough'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What they represent in fact is a manoeuvre to prevent the Geneva peace talks from foundering, given the wide distance which separates the protagonists on all the 'substantive issues', let alone the problem of the Palestinians. They also represent an attempt by Kissinger to draw Syria—which has so far preferred to watch developments from afar—into the constant round of bargaining.

Essentially, the talk about disengagement is a ploy to conceal the fragility of the Geneva set-up and the extreme difficulty of forging a stable and durable imperialist peace in the area.

PALESTINIANS

No peace settlement has any chance of success—whatever the agreements between the Egyptian and Israeli generals—unless it includes at least some gesture in response to the aspirations of the Palestinians. If no pretence of a solution is forthcoming, then Palestine will remain a time-bomb embedded in any eventual settlement. But the continued lip-service paid by the Arab regimes to the Palestinian cause is inspired simply by the need to retain mass support at home.

Right from the start of the Yom Kippur war, it was clear that the Palestinians would be the losers regardless of the military outcome. The objective of the Arab ruling classes was clear: they hoped to win a prestige victory leading to the recovery of some of the occupied territories, which would then enable them to recognise the existence of the State of Israel without too much loss of face.

This strategy naturally implied the isolation of the Palestinians in their struggle for national and democratic rights. What remained uncertain, however, was the attitude of the organisations of the Palestinian Resistance in this new conjuncture. And initially they expressed distrust of the new war and its real motives, reaffirming their intention to retain, under all circumstances, full freedom of initiative in the struggle for the liberation of Palestine.

RESISTANCE ISOLATED

But the war turned to the political advantage of the Arab states. The Arab ruling classes could now at last, with the support of the Soviet Union, begin to apply their peace strategy. The Resistance found itself completely isolated, facing total destruction of its organisations if it continued the war alone.

It should be noted that the majority of the Resistance organisations, above all the PLO (which acts as a co-ordinating body) and Fateh, are structured in a totally anti-democratic way,

The degeneration of sections of the Palestinian Resistance has hardly been more dramatically illustrated than on the occasion of Henry Kissinger's visit to Lebanon last month.

Fifteen thousand people gathered outside Beirut airport on 16 December to demonstrate against Kissinger's tour of the Middle East, and our comrades of the Revolutionary Communist Group in Lebanon naturally seized the opportunity to circulate copies in Arabic of their recent joint statement with the comrades of the Fourth International in Israel, Matzen-Marxist. This declaration calls for continued support for 'the struggle of the Arab peoples against the Zionist State', and defence of 'the national cause of the Palestinian Arab people—their right to resettle on the territory from which they were expelled, and to live free from all forms of national oppression, which necessarily means the destruction of the Zionist State' (for full text see *Red Weekly*, 21 December).

Nevertheless, no sooner had our comrades started to hand out this declaration than they were physically attacked by some of the demonstrators, who used as a pretext the racist argument that it was an 'Israeli' leaflet. Fortunately, there was an immediate response

GENEVA: PALESTINIANS UNDER PRESSURE



Palestinian exiles outside a refugee camp — they were enthused by the October war, and want to carry the struggle through to the liberation of Palestine.

or else are strictly dependent on various Arab regimes (Saika—Syrian Ba'ath, Palestine Liberation Army—Iraqi Ba'ath). They are dominated by all-powerful bureaucracies which possess substantial material privileges; hence the PLO displays all the characteristics of a State bureaucracy.

Since political power is concentrated in the hands of these pre-State apparatuses, they have a tendency to capitulate in order to safeguard their existence as organisations. But at the same time the leaderships have to reckon with the opposition of their militant rank-and-file together with the Palestinian people in exile, in the refugee camps, who were enthused by the October war and want to carry the struggle through to the liberation of Palestine.

UNPRINCIPLED COMPROMISES

The vacillating positions of the PLO leadership express this dual pressure. In the absence of a real revolutionary organisation of the Palestini-

an masses, it is probable that the tendency to capitulate and liquidate the struggle will win the day. The pressures of the Kremlin, which supplies the Resistance with much of its equipment, will undoubtedly strengthen this trend.

Yassir Arafat, the leader of both Fateh and the PLO, is straining every muscle to obtain a place at the Geneva conference. But by so doing, he is not only showing his willingness to engage the Resistance on the path of unprincipled compromises, but at the same time undermining his own hold over the Palestinians, since it is obvious that any peace established at Geneva can only be at the expense of the Palestinian people.

This diplomatic struggle for representation is leading the PLO leadership to make concessions which only a few months ago would have been unthinkable. Thus Arafat is reliably reported to have declared to Sadat that, 'King Faisal of Arabia thinks and acts exactly like a fedayin of Fateh'. The powerful diplomatic and military support given by Saudi Arabia to Hussein during the massacre of the fedayin in September 1970 is well known; such counter-revolutionary statements are a clear indication of the political decay and degeneration of much

of the Palestinian Resistance.

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Meanwhile, resistance in the occupied territories has intensified since the October war. During the fighting, the Palestinians in the occupied territories stopped work en masse in solidarity with the Arab states, and in the last two months a new wave of unrest has swept the West Bank. The Israelis have reacted sharply by deporting 'troublemakers' to Jordan, and closing Bir-Zat college, near Ramallah, described as 'a centre of agitation and subversive activity'. Needless to say these measures were supported by Mapam, the 'left face' of the ruling Alignment.

The Zionist regime will probably be compelled to give up the West Bank eventually in the peace talks (to whom—Hussein or the PLO—is as yet far from clear). But even at the eleventh hour, the occupation authorities are committing new crimes—deportations, blowing up of houses, etc.—which only demonstrate the futility of trying to co-exist peacefully with the racist State of Israel. The overthrow of Zionism is a precondition for genuine peace between Arab and Jew in the Middle East.

ALAN ADLER

They will find this difficult to achieve, however. As the comrades of the Revolutionary Communist Group stated in a leaflet distributed the day after the clashes:

'These repressive acts will not scare us off. We affirm our resolve to continue pressing our line and to put it forward before the broadest masses. In doing this, we will be no less courageous than our comrades who dare to raise their voices in solidarity with the Arab peoples in the very heart of the Zionist State and against its repressive apparatus. The voice of revolutionary Marxists penetrates all repression.'

'We extend on this occasion our thanks to all the patriotic Palestinian and Lebanese groups who intervened to defend our comrades, and we invite them to raise their voices in protest against this incident and against all attacks on democratic rights within the national liberation movement.'

'Down with the repressive acts of the champions of racism and capitulation!

'Down with the plans to liquidate the Palestinian cause and the Arab revolution!'

'For a common revolutionary struggle of Arab and Jewish workers against imperialism, Zionism, and the Arab ruling classes!'

PLO right-wingers attack Arab Trotskyists

to this attack not only from our own comrades but also from militants of other Palestinian and Arab organisations who came to their assistance, and although shots were fired in the air and a certain amount of panic ensued, the incident was short-lived. Six comrades were arrested, but then released almost immediately thanks to the intervention of Palestinian militants.

The initiative in this provocation was taken by some members of Fateh—or rather, of Rasd, Fateh's intelligence and internal police division—together with members of the Democratic Popular Front for the

Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), which in three years has passed from the far left to the far right of the Palestinian movement. The motivation behind it is quite clear: these organisations, far from rejecting a Geneva-type 'peaceful solution', are openly hinting at their willingness to liquidate the Palestinian cause as a revolutionary one through such plans as the establishment of a 'client' Palestinian State on the West Bank. They will therefore attempt to nip in the bud any moves to organise opposition to this capitulation among the rank-and-file of the Palestinian movement.



China's aid strengthens Thai regime against upsurges like that of students last year

May, whereby in return for some trade concessions Chou En-lai assured Marcos that China would cease to give any further aid to the insurgents in Mindanao.

The result of this deal is to leave the guerrillas of the Thai Patriotic Front in the lurch. Not only will China be expected under the terms of the agreement to withdraw even her previous token support for them, but it will be surprising if the much-needed Chinese oil does not find its way into the fuel tanks of the Thai military vehicles and planes now being used against the TPF in the North-East province.

The Chinese may well attempt to justify this stance on the grounds that the new Thai regime of a civil bureaucracy is 'more progressive' than a military dictatorship, but the change has been slight indeed. Despite the current misgivings of a section of the Thai ruling class, Thailand is still the main US base against the revolution in South-East Asia. There are over 35,000 US troops still in Thailand, and the US bases are on continuous stand-by. The Green Berets operating in PRG zones in South Vietnam are flown in from Nakhon Phanom in Thailand, and it is almost certain

that the F-111 fighter bombers which have been supporting convoys on the Mekong against Red Khmer attacks are also based in Thailand. Moreover, the position of the US in Thailand has recently been further reinforced by the appointment of William Kirtner, admiral of President Park of South Korea and long-time agent of the CIA, as US ambassador in Bangkok.

The recent moves towards liberalisation in Thailand, far from signifying a new 'progressive' regime, reflect in fact the need for more flexibility to deal not only with the guerrilla threat in the North but also with the increasingly vocal opposition from workers and students in Bangkok itself. In these manoeuvres to stave off the revolutionary upsurge building up in Thailand, the regime has now found a willing helper in Peking. As in other countries, the Chinese bureaucracy has chosen to trade in the revolutionary aspirations of the Thai workers and peasants in return for the dubious benevolence of the Thai elite. The lessons of this counter-revolutionary trafficking must not be forgotten.

WORKERS

VS.

The 1926 General Strike

Last week we reported in *Red Weekly* that the Newcastle Trades Council is planning to revive the *Workers Chronicle*, the paper which it produced during the 1926 general strike. This is an indication that ever-wider layers within the workers movement realise that we are entering a period of intense class struggle similar to that of the early 1920's and requiring similar methods of struggle.

It also serves as a timely reminder that the nine brief days of the 1926 general strike were a period of unparalleled working class combativity and creativity from which we have much to learn.

CRISIS AND SHOWDOWN

For the first two years after the First World War boom conditions prevailed throughout British industry. The new strength and fighting spirit of the trade union movement combined with these favourable conditions to produce some important working class victories. The power of the Triple Industrial Alliance of the miners, railmen, and transport workers was such that the mere threat of united strike action was sufficient to make the Government retreat. Thus the Alliance was able to successfully challenge Government policy on such key questions as intervention against the Russian Revolution, conscription, and the mining industry.

However, towards the end of 1920 the boom came to a sudden end and British capitalism was plunged into crisis. The ruling class and its Government were determined to force the working class to bear the cost of this crisis, and prepared for a showdown with the trade union movement. Henceforth the threat of industrial action would not be enough.

In 1921 the showdown came over the Government's decision to remove war-time controls from the mining industry, thus encouraging the owners to smash the system of national wage rates that had been built up during the war and impose drastic wage cuts through new district agreements. Once again the Triple Alliance threatened to strike—but this time the Government called their bluff.

On 15 April 'Black Friday'—the union bureaucrats showed their true faces by calling off their planned strike on a flimsy pretext and abandoning the miners to the tender mercies of the Government and the coalowners.

This treachery was a tremendous disaster for the trade union movement and the entire working class. In one year unemployment shot up from 2% to almost 13%. Between 1921 and 1926 it was never less than 10%. Prices were falling in these years—by about 25% between 1921 and 1926—but the defeat of 'Black Friday' meant that the employers could push

wages down even more rapidly, wiping out the gains won by hard struggle in the post-war years.

Not surprisingly, the trade union movement took a beating. The TUC affiliated unions lost more than 2 million members—a third of their total membership, between 1921 and 1926.

NEW CONFRONTATION

Temporarily checked on the industrial front, the working class turned to electoral action. But the country's first Labour Government, formed in 1924, was short lived and a total failure. Its political dependence on the Liberal Party in Parliamentary leaders ensured that.

Thus it was that 1925 saw a renewed prospect of mass, industrial action. The miners made proposals for a new industrial alliance, and discussions were opened with the transport unions (TGWU and the railway unions) and the engineers. Plans went ahead, and the Alliance was broadened to include the electricians, foundry workers and iron and steel workers. But J.H. Thomas succeeded in pulling the NUR out of this scheme.

Under the guidance of Ernest Bevin of the Transport and General Workers the new Alliance was founded on an elaborate constitution. This was designed to avoid another 'Black Friday' fiasco, but it meant that the Alliance was burdened with a series of time-consuming, bureaucratic procedures. So, after more than a year of discussions, conferences and ballots, the Alliance was still no more than an embryo when the storm of the general strike broke.

Meanwhile the miners were again engaged in struggle. In the summer of 1925 the coal owners gave notice of drastic wage cuts and the ending of the national minimum wage. The miners turned to the TUC for support, and the General Council pledged support. In the event of a coal lockout, it was agreed that an embargo would be imposed on all coal movements.

But the Tory Government, under Stanley Baldwin, did not yet feel ready for such a fight. So, taking a leaf out of Lloyd George's book, they decided to play for time. As Thomas Jones, the deputy secretary to the cabinet during these years, wrote shortly afterwards:

'In July 1925 the Government were threatened with a concerted attack by the big Unions. The Country was ill-informed as to the merits of the coal dispute and the Government was uncertain as to how far it could rely on its emergency preparations. A breathing space was obtained by means of a subsidy and the appointment of a Royal Commission.'

This plan was accepted by the TUC and the miners, and was heralded as a great victory. The day of its announcement was labelled 'Red Friday' in an effort to wash away the ugly

memories of 'Black Friday'.

GOVERNMENT PREPARES

But the rot that gave birth to 'Black Friday' was still firmly implanted at the very heart of the trade union leadership. The Government used the 'breathing space' to build up its emergency preparations—through the reactivation and reorganisation of the Supply and Transport Organisation (the body which it had used to prepare for a general strike in 1919 and 1921) and the encouragement of the 'unofficial' Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies which was sponsored by prominent Tories and drew on the services of the newly-created British Fascist). The trade unions did nothing.

Indeed, some trade union 'leaders' actively opposed preparation! J.J. Thomas, the railwaymen's leader, attacked those who called for preparation less than one month before the strike began: '...instead of organising, mobilising and encouraging the feeling that war was inevitable, let them concentrate on finding a solution honourable and satisfactory to all sides.'

The Government's Royal Commission reported in March 1926. It stressed the inefficient and uneconomic nature of the industry, and called for a long-term scheme of reorganisation. At the same time it called for an end to the Government subsidy, and insisted that the miners had to bear the burdens of the industry's problems by accepting wage cuts. The commission, however, did support the principle of a national wage agreement.

The Government played a tricky game, offering to back the Report 'provided that those engaged in this industry—with whom the decision primarily rests—agree to accept the Report....' But both the mineowners and the miners rejected the Report, the former because of the provisions for a national wage agreement, the latter because of its insistence on wage cuts and well-founded doubts about the ability of the owners to carry through any serious reorganisation. Negotiations between the miners and the owners rapidly broke down, and lock-out notices were posted, to become effective on 30 April.

GOVERNMENT STANDS FIRM

The TUC did not back the miners' stand. Instead they tried to persuade the miners to accept the Report as a basis for settlement, provided that guarantees were given on reorganisation, and urged the Government to intervene along these lines.

However the refusal of the coalowners to budge and of the Government to intervene meant that such a compromise was impossible. Reluctantly, the TUC had to throw its weight behind the miners cause. Thus moves were made to call a meeting of trade union executives, which agreed to a sympathetic general strike to begin on 4 May.

The TUC still hoped to negotiate a last minute compromise. But the Government—aware of the reluctance with which the TUC leaders were taking this action and confident in the thoroughness of their own preparations—wanted a showdown.

The attitude of the TUC leaders can be gleaned from a statement of Thomas, made after one negotiating session:

'I suppose my usual critics will say that Thomas was almost grovelling, and it is true. In all my long experience...I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all day to-day, and I pleaded not alone because I believed in the case of the miners, but because in my bones I believed that my duty to the country involved it.'

The Government knew that their greatest weapon in this struggle was the trade union bureaucrats' deep-seated fear of any action that challenged 'Parliamentary Government' (i.e. capitalist class rule). It would be accurate to say that the TUC bureaucrats were more afraid of the general strike than was the Government.

Thus, as soon as the general strike call went out, the Government broke off negotiations with the TUC and refused to renew them until the strike was called. The union bureaucrats



The remnants of a car that had been caught on a s... Council, but it was completely necessary to establish defeating the Government.

were literally booted, whimpering and whining, by the Government into calling the strike.

RANK-AND-FILE FIGHT

The attitude of the rank-and-file was totally different. They responded to the strike call with magnificent unity and ingenuity. All across the country local Councils of Action and joint strike committees were set up to run the strike. Local daily bulletins were published to replace the scab capitalist newspapers. The regulation of road traffic handling of essential supplies, and mass picketing of scab operations were organised. In many areas Workers Defence Corps were formed to protect the strikers against police attack.

Rather than being encouraged by these developments, the bureaucrats were even more terrified. They issued their own newspaper the *British Worker*, consisting mainly of dry resolutions and statements from the TUC, and issued orders that nothing except this material was to be published locally (a recipe for making workers totally dependent on the Government's scab *British Gazette* or local scab papers, since the *British Worker* was not available in many localities and carried little news).

The fears which were in the minds of the bureaucrats were voiced by J.H. Thomas the day after the strike was called off:

'What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this' If by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. I thank God it never did. That is why I believe that the decision yesterday was such a big decision, and that is why that danger, that fear always in our minds....'

The reality of this feat was stressed by Charles Dukes of the General and Municipal Workers, who commented 'every day that the strike proceeded the control and authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible Executives....'

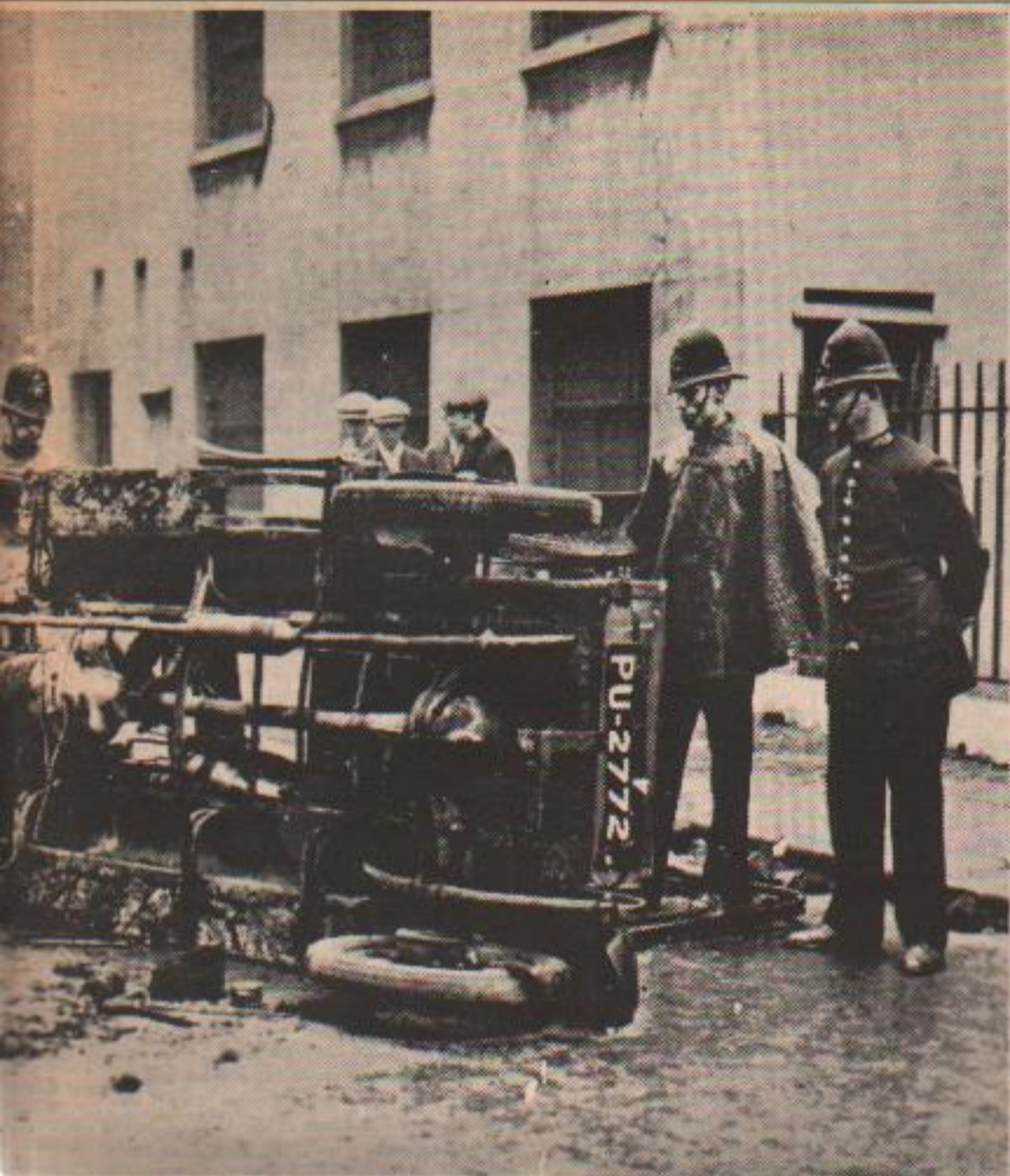
BUREAUCRATS SELL-OUT

Rather than lose control of the struggle, the bureaucrats were prepared to wreck the movement. From the very beginning of the strike they sought to renew contact with the



Police attack strikers in Liverpool. This was the sort of thing that went on where there was no Workers' Defence Corps. In a town like Methil, Fife where 700 strikers, under the command of ex army NGOs and armed with pick handles, regularly patrolled the streets the police were very cooperative and the strikers were without incident.

THE STATE



breaking mission. This was the type of incident which truck terror into the hearts of the TUC General
workers control over transport and the movement of essential supplies: a decisive step on the road to

What is a Council of Action?

Red Weekly has often raised the slogan 'For the creation of Councils of Action'. Why do we see such bodies as so important now? What is a Council of Action?

A Council of Action is one of the most advanced forms of organisation which the working class movement can create: an extraordinary committee of delegates from all working class organisations. What makes it so exceptional is that no workers' organisation, be it 'political' or 'economic', is excluded. A Council of Action represents the working class as a whole. It welds the class into a unified and cohesive force, allowing it to present a united face to the class enemy.

URGENT NECESSITY

Bodies like this become an urgent necessity when the workers' movement has to bind itself together to perform some decisive task. They have emerged in different times and places, for various purposes and under a variety of names. Sometimes they have been called soviets or workers councils. They have been formed to seize and run factories, fight an election, or conduct an armed uprising.

In Britain they have been called Councils of Action and were formed in 1926 to conduct the general strike. Today in Britain a general strike is needed to beat back the Tory offensive, and Councils of Action become essential once again.

It is easy to see why such a body is necessary to organise workers in a general strike. The capitalists know perfectly well that a general strike is an all-out struggle, and that their future depends on the outcome. All the resources of the capitalist state are accordingly centralised to fight against the strikers. Thousands of scabs are recruited, thousands of civilians made into 'special constables', the police forces re-equipped and turned into shock troops and the army mobilised. The Government takes wide emergency powers to commandeer buildings, printing presses, factories and transport to use against the strike, and assumes wide powers of arrest and detention without trial.

In short, the state is placed on a war footing. A general strike can only be successful if the working class can achieve an equivalent level of organisation and is able to counter the various strike-breaking moves made by a highly centralised enemy. This is where the Councils of Action come in.

It has often been said of general strikes, that he who feeds the people wins the strike. If working people begin to suffer hardship as a result of the strike, the unity of the strikers will be threatened. The capitalist state will attempt to maintain essential supplies by the use of scab labour, to win the credit for feeding the people.

AUTHORITY

This is a job which some local councils of Action in 1926 took on. Unloading of food at docks, its transport to the cities, the tasks of distribution to shops, and the creation of a

food rationing system, and the supervision of food supplies to stop black marketeering are all tasks the strikers themselves undertook. In many districts no private transport of any kind was allowed to run, except that which received a permit from the Council of Action. All transport was inspected by the workers to ensure that no materials were transported to industries run by scabs.

This type of operation is something which can only be planned and organised by a central body such as a Council of Action, to which all the strikers owe their allegiance. At the same time, the Council of Action can only acquire the necessary authority in the eyes of the population at large, if it is able to establish its rule in the streets, and make its rules and regulations effective.

This can only be done by the centralised organisation of picket squads. Thousands of pickets have to be organised, not just to stop lorries or scabs going in and out of the factories, but to control and patrol the main roads themselves. The defence of these pickets against the police requires the creation of a Workers Defence Corps. These must be under the control of a central authority, must be mobile, and must be able to take on large bodies of police on their own terms. In 1926, the police were forced to have a healthy respect for such bodies in many areas, and their presence was an important factor in averting widespread bloodshed.

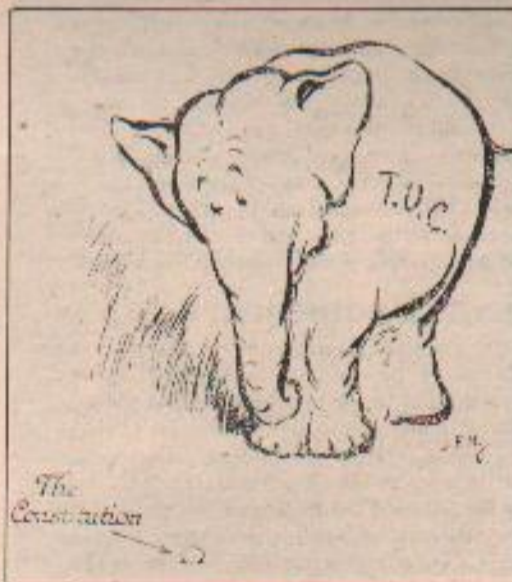
BACKBONE OF WORKERS' STATE

These are not the only tasks of a Council of Action. In 1926 some Councils set about publishing newspapers, arranging communications between one town and another, and fixing up entertainments for the strikers. Ideally, the Council would be elected by democratic strike committees or on the basis of mass elections by the entire body of the strikers, but this seldom happened in 1926.

It can readily be seen why the trade union bureaucracy is so reluctant to embark on a second general strike. The Council, in order to be effective, must involve the mass of strikers in day-to-day decision making. But this makes the strikers feel they want to take direct responsibility for the outcome of the strike. The strike can rapidly get out of the control of the trade union leaders, and resistance to any compromise settlement can grow by the hour.

Secondly, the Council of Action is much more than a body which expresses the opinions of the strikers. As we have seen, it can only organise the strike effectively, if it seeks to become the sole public authority in a city, town or district, elbowing aside the bourgeois state authorities. This is why Councils of Action, if they were united nationally and counterposed their authority to that of the bourgeois Government and Parliament, could become the foundation stone of the socialist revolution, and the backbone of a workers' state.

Dave Bailey



A 'PLEBS' STRIKE CARTOON
The Elephant's 'T.U.C.' is not to be used to feed the masses.

Plebs' very apt view of how the TUC General Council conducted the strike: terrified to do anything that might seem 'unconstitutional'

for a socialist solution to the present crisis.

The creation of bodies through which the rank-and-file can play a direct role in the running of the struggle Councils of Action will not only make it possible for a revolutionary leadership to win over the mass of workers, but will also enable the masses to put revolutionary ideas into practice and transform the nature of the struggle no matter what wretched activities the trade union bureaucrats resort to.

Brian Slocock

Government to work out some face-saving agreement which would allow them to call off the strike. Only the determination of the Government prevented a sell-out much earlier.

The deadlock was broken by the intervention of Sir Herbert Samuel, chairman of the Royal Commission on the mines. He worked out a formula—basically a rehash of his Report—which the TUC agreed to accept as the basis for calling off the strike. The miners refused to accept this, not surprisingly, since there was no indication that the Government would accept these proposals. But the TUC was determined to get the business over with despite the miners' opposition.

On Wednesday, 12 May they went to see Baldwin, and informed him the strike was off. Baldwin refused to offer the TUC representatives any assurances of the Government's position either concerning the Samuel proposals, or on the question of victimisation of workers after the strike—the TUC's surrender was total and unconditional. As Bevin commented after the meeting, 'Something has happened and the best way to describe today, if we are not quick, is that we have committed suicide. Thousands of members will be victimised as the result of this day's work.'

So ended Britain's first—and only—general strike. It was a great calamity for the workers' movement, engineered by the political bankruptcy and outright treachery of the union bureaucrats.

As in all decisive struggles a leadership which was not prepared to take on the full power of the capitalist government and challenge its very right to govern could not carry the fight through to a successful conclusion. For the trade union bureaucrats the defence of working class interests only comes second—after the preservation of 'the constitution', 'Parliament' (i.e. of the institutions by which the capitalist class wields political power). Thus they become totally paralyzed when the ruling class swings these institutions into the battle as their 'heavy guns'.

It is as true today as it was in 1926 that only a conscious, revolutionary leadership can carry the

Join the Red Weekly readers

For a PLEBS' socialist analysis of the latest developments in the class struggle

£4 for one year £2 for 6 mos. Introductory offer: 12 issues for 50p.

cash with order to: *Red Weekly*, 97 Caledonian Rd., London, N.1.

Name _____ Address _____

The scale of the Tory Government attacks on the living standards of millions of people is becoming increasingly clear to the 600,000 students who returned to their colleges last week.

The Government have made three slashing attacks on education spending in one year, culminating in Barber's December 'crisis budget', and have cancelled one entire year's building programme for the colleges. Quite apart from the redundancies this will cause in the building trade, students will find themselves faced more and more with accommodation shortages, soaring rents, and massively overcrowded teaching facilities.

LOCAL CHALLENGE

Since the fight at Kent University by students and college workers against redundancies and price rises in the summer of 1972, each new move to implement the ruling class policy of higher education on the cheap has met with a strong challenge at the local level. The fierce struggles around such issues as lack of accommodation, high prices and rents at the end of last year, in Brighton, Leeds, Essex and Birmingham, point to an equally militant response to the Tories' attack in the coming months.

However the cutbacks will mean more than worsening conditions in the colleges. The National Union of Students Executive is still earnestly chatting with the Government in the current review of the grant level, while doing little to prepare for a real fight against the erosion of the grant levels.

The reductions in state expenditure on higher education make it probable that the Tories will cut even the pitifully small increase they proposed last year. While agreeing to pay married women students the full rate of the grant, the Tories will likely offer an increase in the grant of about £90 spread over three years. The NUS claim is for an immediate increase of £170 on the existing main rate of £485 for all students, including those who at present get a token amount from their local authorities or nothing at all. The £90 would amount to an increase of 6% a year, which, at the current rate of inflation, would mean that the real value of the grant would go down £15 each year.

Moreover, the Tory-imposed three-day week will mean that parents who are forced to pay towards the cost of their children's

Students must go for action now

Last term's occupation at Essex University, where the authorities have now instituted disciplinary proceedings against 30 of those involved... 'As the students at Essex have already said, the best way to defend them is to take up their example'.

education will have to reduce their contribution or cut it altogether. In many cases this will force students to leave college.

What has been the response of the NUS Executive to this attack? Innumerable statements to the capitalist press, but not much else. Still clinging to their pressure politics, the Executive has called off, in all but name, the 'Week of Action' which was to follow the national grants demonstration on 8 February in London. Instead, they have proposed a 'week of public activity' on 4 March, so late in the term that students cannot use this event to prepare for a real struggle in the colleges. Why has this happened?

COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party is politically dominant in the Executive. In line with their strategy of building an alliance between the working class, 'small' bosses, trade union and Labour Party bureaucrats, liberal academics and other 'progressive' forces against the interests of big monopoly capital, the CP sees the way forward for the Grants Campaign in terms of an alliance with these forces against the policies



of the Tory Government in higher education.

In this case it is to be the college authorities and the Vice Chancellors who play a key role in 'pressuring' the Tories. Of course the college authorities don't like the cuts since it makes life difficult for them. However this does not mean, as the CP concludes, that the Vice Chancellors will link arms with students and the working class against the Tory attacks. In fact, in order to conserve what little money is available to them, they will step up the erosion of student living standards inside the colleges by raising rents and prices and laying off college workers. They will back up these attacks by the use of victimisations, court actions, and attacks by private squads of thug security guards if students try to resist these cuts. This is borne out by the experience of student militants in Oxford, Essex, and Bristol last term.

What can students do to force back the attacks in the colleges and ram home the fight against the Tories? Firstly, the latest betrayals by the trade union bureaucrats make it even more urgent that every possible ally of the working class is drawn into the fight to get rid of the common enemy—the Tory Government. A victory for the working class at this stage, in particular a victory for the miners, would weaken the Tory Government and thus be a victory for all those presently suffering from its policies. The Tories and the capitalist press realise this fact and are straining every muscle to block any moves towards such a united offensive. Students can expect threats by the college authorities to close down the college if they threaten to launch militant struggles. The same ploy may well be used to try and prevent mass student action in support of the miners. Even more likely is the partial closing of institutions, and the cutting off of heating and lighting, to arouse sections of the population like students and white collar workers against the miners.

FIGHT ON BOTH FRONTS

Every available platform must be used to put the case of the working class against the Tory Government to the mass of students. Colleges should invite miners' representatives to speak at union meetings, and student unions should pledge support for all workers' struggles, including that around the freeing of the Shrewsbury building workers and actions against the 3-day week. Colleges who put up miners during the last strike and aided flying pickets at power stations and ports should get in contact with the lodge and area committees of the NUM whose members came down to offer support and information in the event of a strike. In the event of a national miners' strike being called, the NUS should centralise the activities of student support committees, calling conferences and demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle against the Tory government.

However, this is only part of the story. Students must make sure their own fight involves the greatest number of students at the highest level of militancy possible. Real unity between students and workers can be forged in action, not through pious resolutions at NUS Conferences.

As we have seen, the Tories' attack on the living standards of students takes place on two broad fronts—worsening of conditions in the colleges and allowing rising prices to eat away the real value of the grant. They are attacking us on both fronts; we must fight back on both fronts. It is insufficient merely to raise the national demands of the grants campaign, we must also have demands which make sure the

Tories do not give with one hand and take away with the other.

Students have already begun to take up the fight. The number of colleges going on rent strike in response to the call of Margate Conference increases every day. The figure is now 35. These strikes must not be left to become isolated. It is vitally important that these rent strikes are part of a programme of direct action which includes a set of demands which can unite the rent strikers with other students in the colleges and beat back the attacks on student living standards.

Area meetings or conferences must be organised to include all colleges in the locality in this programme of direct action. Grants Action Committees should find out exactly how much prices have gone up in the colleges, whether or not student expansion will be matched by increased facilities, and if the college administration is thinking of laying off staff to cut down on costs. Demands based on this sort of information will bring home to students the need to defend our living standards through ongoing action. There will be no confusion between the local and national demands of the campaign; they will be seen as integrally linked. This will be the most effective way we can show the Tories we mean business.

NO BUCK PASSING

Grants Action Committees should make sure that the college authorities in the public sector do not pass the buck on to the Local Education Authorities by putting joint demands on the college authorities and the LEAs, backed up by occupations of LEA offices. They should demand that local councils refuse to implement the cuts in state expenditure, following the example of Monmouth County Council.

The disciplinary hearings arising out of the Essex occupation last term now look as though they will involve over 30 students, and even some lecturing staff. Because Essex was the first college to take up the fight last term, the defence of these students will be seen as an important test for the student movement—not just by militants in other colleges, but also by the college authorities. The key to the defence of the Essex militants is to throw the college authorities on the defensive. They must be shown that the victimisation of students will not demoralise those taking action, but actually draw new forces into the struggle. As the students at Essex have already said, the best way to defend them is to take up their example.

The national demonstration must be a priority for all students. The demonstration in and of itself will not force the Tories to concede, but it will boost the morale of those colleges taking action in the absence of any real leadership from the executive and provide a political focus for all the activists in the campaign. It can be an important expression of militant opposition to the Tory Government in alliance with the working class. A 'week of action' must follow this demonstration whether the Executive supports it or not, otherwise the opportunity to take up the fight for a higher grant this term will have been lost.

A campaign of direct action around the national demands of the campaign and demands such as expansion of facilities to match increases in student numbers, a freeze on prices and rents, no redundancies for college workers and a hardship fund to subsidise students hit by the three day week, will give militants a real focus for the long hard struggle against the Tories.

RAY BURNS

Review



COUP POUR COUP (Blow for Blow), a film directed by Marin Karmitz (France 1972)

Blow for Blow is a brilliant agitational film about two kinds of violence. Right from the first shot the audience is plunged into that fantastic degree of daily violence which the capitalist organisation of work inflicts on the working class (in the film, women workers in a textile factory): the violence of the pace of work on the conveyor belt, the infernal noise, the dirt and heat. The permanent supervision of one's movements is crowned by further 'attacks' such as inadequate housing, the overburdening of domestic life etc. . . .

These attacks are challenged in the film after the sacking of two of the so-called agitators. Pitiless retaliation by the workers reaches its climax in their revenge on the boss: a just reward even if far from compensating for all the attacks they suffer from the system he represents. By giving 'blow for blow' (see photo), the workers begin to break down their atomised existences (reinforced by wage differentials and lack of means of communication). Through their

struggle comes an awareness of their position and common interests. On the screen we see class-consciousness grow before our eyes.

Of course there are many weaknesses in the film—especially as it does not project the struggle beyond the immediate victory shown. However, what the film does do brilliantly is what the British left too often fails to do: expose the need to overthrow the capitalist system in a way that the broadest mass of workers can grasp. More than that: it stirs the audience to action by putting all the expertise of the bourgeois cinema to a revolutionary purpose. Two hundred defenders of the 'programme' are worth less in the class struggle than one vivid illustration of this sort.

This is a film that should be seen by all those workers who calmly accept their oppressive conditions. But unfortunately, because of the monopoly of Rank and ABC trash on the circuits, it won't be.

JULIET WYNTER

This film is showing at the Electric Cinema, Portobello Road, London W11 until Tuesday 22 January and possibly longer (ring 01-727 4992 to check).

LABOUR: RIGHT WING RAMPAGE ENCOURAGES TORIES

One of the most encouraging developments for Heath & Co. in the present crisis has been the open capitulation of the right-wing of the Labour Party before the Tory offensive and the confused, indeed often non-existent, response of the Labour left.

To make an accurate assessment of Labour's crisis, it is necessary to examine the social forces represented by the contestants among the party's executive. But the first point to be established is that no section of the Labour Party at present represents in a direct sense the interests of the working class.

No one, with the extremely confused exception of the 'Militant' group, is openly saying that what is at stake is an attempt by the bourgeoisie to solve an inextricable economic crisis at the expense of the working class by the use of all the power and manoeuvres of the bourgeois state, and that this process can only culminate and be defeated in a direct working class struggle for power. The only approach to a real working class response in action is the heroic struggle at Clay Cross—a struggle which has been stabbed in the back by most sections of the Labour leadership and greeted lukewarmly by even the most radical of the rest.

JENKINS-PRENTICE AXIS

If there is no strong element within the Labour Party which fully represents the interests of the working class there is, however, a very definite wing which represents the immediate interests of the bourgeoisie. This is the Jenkins-Prentice section of the Labour Party. These elements reflect the effects of one of the most important social processes which has been taking place in the Labour Party since 1945—the increasing weight of layers which are not based on the organisations of the working class but on the capitalist state, the nationalised industries, and even private capitalism.

A whole host of people first reflected the interests of these social groups and then departed for them. Woodrow Wyatt, George Brown, and Ray Gunter all reflected in an immediate sense the interests of private capital, all were involved in it when active in Labour politics, and all have departed for it. Marsh and Robens moved easily into the nationalised industries. Thomson moved with Peel and Paynter of the trade union bureaucracy, into a position in the state apparatus. It is these elements who dominated the 1964-70 Labour Government and now find their successors in Jenkins-Prentice.

These elements within the Labour party are in no doubt as to where their loyalties lie. Prentice's call that 'the moderate members of the party must stand up and be counted' and his attack on 'the sillier forms of trade union militancy', were a direct call for aid to the ruling class in its crisis. Equally obvious was the immediate support Prentice received from Sir Reg Goodwin, Labour leader of the GLC, and 23 other local government leaders and prospective Labour candidates. Their letter to Wilson began: 'We, as Labour councillors and prospective Labour candidates are writing to you to express our unequivocal support for Reg Prentice's brave and truthful speech about the sillier forms of militancy.'

This section of the Labour party is not in any sense based on the working class and will never follow Labour in any left turn. It will simply leave the party—either as individuals or en bloc to form a new party or join the Liberals or the Tories.

If the open right is on the rampage, what of its traditional opponents? Here there is a very sharp change compared to the period before the early 1960s. In any period from the 1930s to the 1960s the main opposition to Prentice's line, the main bastion of the left, would have been the constituency Labour parties. All is largely quiet on that front at present, however. Prentice has been asked to explain himself by his local party and the Labour candidate for North Norfolk, Andrew Phillips, has received a vote of no confidence, 22-20, by his general management committee. But there is nothing like the unrest there would have been in the early 1950s when the Bevanites could get two-thirds of the constituency vote.

The reason for this is obvious. It lies in the enormous, qualitative, decline of individual working class involvement in the constituency

Labour parties. In 1965-69 alone a sixth of the membership of the Labour party left and in the biggest and generally most working class localities the fall was nearly a third. The right-wing swing this produced has continued and at the last Labour Party conference the votes for every left candidate elected to the NEC fell while those for the right wingers increased.

The constituency left, despite the visions of a few Tribunites and the 'Militant' group no longer a base for a mass opposition to the extreme right wing. This has meant an end to the old-style leftist demagogue of the Foot-Bevan type. The Tribune group duly came out with its statement on 30th November declaring: 'We want to make it absolutely clear that we fully support the miners and other sections of workers in their struggles for higher wages and better conditions.' But hardly anyone noticed.

But if the constituency left has declined, a new bastion—the 'left' trade union bureaucracy—has been created for those who wish to contest for the leadership of Labour in opposition to an openly class collaborationist stance. In the old style 1930s-50s line-up in the Labour Party, it was the trade union bureaucrats who were the absolute bastion of the right. In 1935 every single one of the amendments of the leftist 'Socialist League' was defeated by the trade union bureaucrats. It was the trade union bloc vote which was used to defeat Bevan in the early 1950s. Now, however, it is the trade union vote which has been the core of the left against the Labour leadership.

BENN—A NEW TYPE OF LEFT LEADER

But the trade union leadership is not directly represented within the Labour Party leadership. The result has been the emergence of a new type of left leader, of which Benn is the most obvious example, who is not based on the constituency Labour parties, as was Bevan, but who represents within the Labour Party the interests of the left trade union bureaucracy and

their attempts to direct the working class from the state struggle to elections. This is the meaning of Benn's rhetoric on workers' control, in reality workers' participation. It is also why, at almost exactly the same time as Prentice was denouncing militancy, Benn could stand up and say: 'The Labour party will be giving full support to the trade union movement which is under direct attack by the Government.'

Since then Benn has moved on to further demagoguery. At his public meeting in Deptford on 9 January he was moved to declare: 'The miners' campaign is a symbol of the struggle of working people throughout Britain who, faced with rising prices and rents and mortgage payments, simply cannot manage on the wages the Government is prepared to allow, and bitterly resent the attacks on the unions which are their first line of defence.' He also quite accurately described the 3-day week as 'a wage cut designed to cause hardship.'

Of course, Benn's politics are far from real socialist ones. He never poses the real questions of power and avoids a firm commitment to breaking Phase 3, but nevertheless his is a rhetoric and line which, following that of the trade union bureaucracy, is opposed to the immediate interests of the bourgeoisie.

WILSON'S DILEMMA

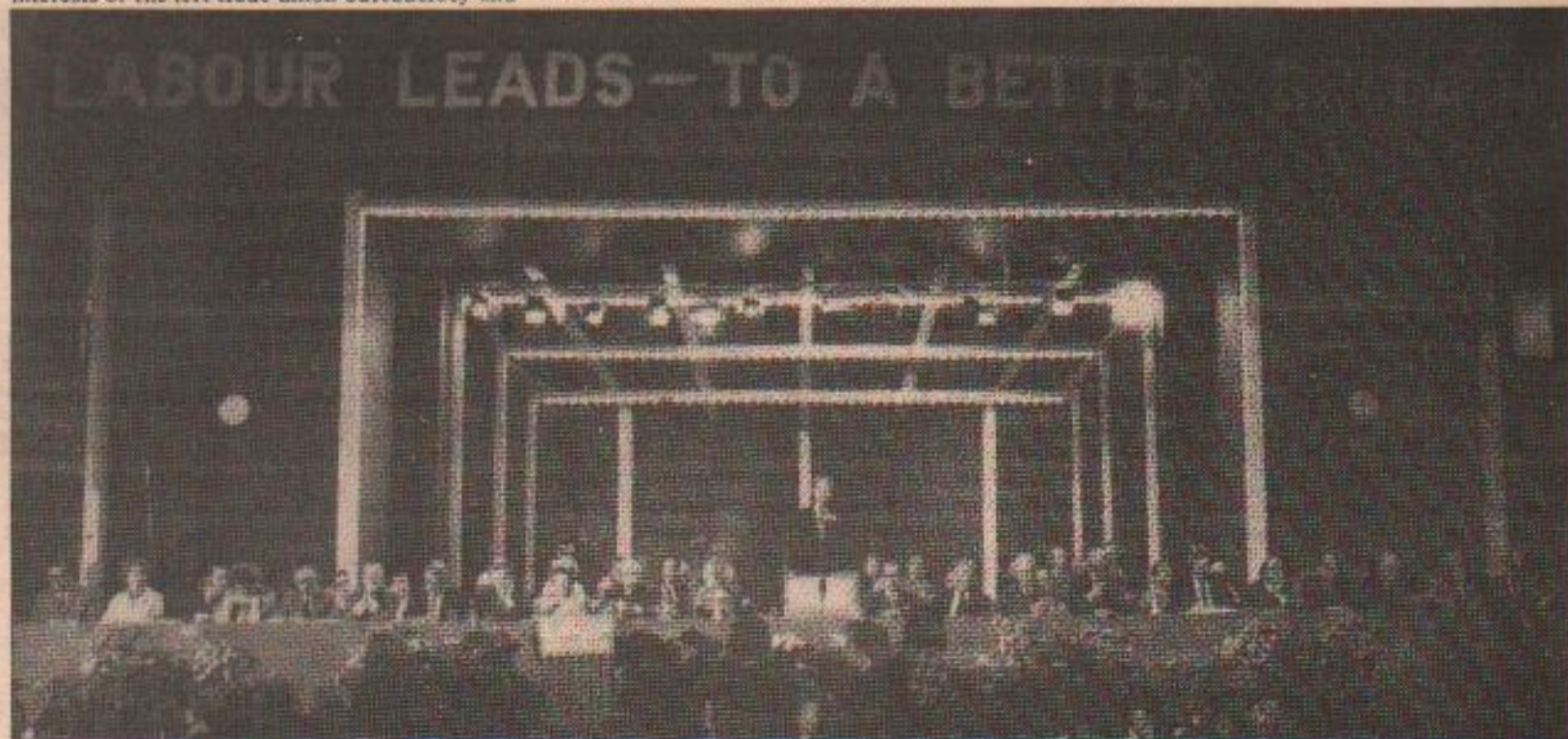
The crisis that faces the Labour leadership is how to situate itself in relation to the forces we have just analysed. As far as their subjective desires are concerned the answer is obvious. Wilson would like to go back to the good old days of the 1960s when the dominant line-up was the Labour leadership in alliance with the extreme right of the Party. The trouble is that what the bureaucracy can do is determined not by its desires but by the objective forces in society. The open right, despite valiant efforts, has no hope of convincing any section of the ruling class, outside of a severe capitalist defeat in the industrial struggle, to support the Labour party in the way that they did in 1964. For this reason the road to office for Wilson in

alliance with the extreme right of the party is almost entirely closed. But Wilson fears any alliance with the Labour left. This might open up a dynamic of working class struggle which would get completely out of the control of Labour. For this reason he is desperately attempting both to straddle the tide of the 'Bennite' left and avoid a complete break with the right. Which of the two he emphasises changes from day to day and audience to audience. It was for this reason that he engaged in enormous leftist rhetoric at the Labour Party conference but got the 25 companies issue shelved. It is why, in an interview he gave to the *Star* on 28 November, he stoutly defended the right of the miners to have an overtime ban but at the same time said 'I do not support and will not support any action against the law' and 'I have not supported any particular pay claim.' And of course he totally refuses to support the smashing of Phase 3.

The trouble with this tactic, even from the point of view of the Labour bureaucracy, is that it is completely untenable. At present no section of the ruling class supports Labour and no gains are to be made by an open right-wing position. At the same time the failure of Wilson to break with the open right and fully embrace even the demagogic and timid 'leftism' of Benn prevents the Labour party launching a mass appeal for working class votes. The end result is a situation where Labour support falls because of abstention or goes to demagogic nationalist elements. If Labour, with or without Wilson, does not complete the process of adopting more radical 'left' positions which it has started, by the leadership openly taking it up, Labour faces the prospect of the worst electoral defeat for 40 years.

JOHN MARSHALL

P.10 — Lefts cover up for Labour incomes policy trap



WHAT'S ON?

LONDON RED FORUMS: New series begins this Tuesday 22 January at 8 pm in the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road, 5 mins King's Cross tube. This week: 'What is imperialism'. Twelve meetings in the series, same time and place each week.

WINCHESTER PRISONERS: Picket of Wormwood Scrubs prison at 3 pm, Saturday 19 January, assemble 2.30 pm Shepherds Bush Green—Governor will be challenged to try force-feeding for himself; demonstration Sunday 20 January, marching from rally at Speakers Corner at 2.30 pm to Kilburn Square; public meeting Sunday 20 January, 8 pm in Lord Palmerston, Kilburn High Road—speakers: Sean McDermot (IPHC Chairman), Maureen Maguire (IPHC secretary), Bob Purdie (IPHC press officer).

AGAINST RACISM & FASCISM: Area campaign (Kingston-Richmond-Twickenham) public meeting, Friday 18 January, 7.45 pm in Surbiton Assembly

Rooms (5 mins from Surbiton station). Speakers: Mike Cooley (AUEW/TASS), Steven Rose, Jake Bharier (Kingston LPI), Steve Lynch (G&MWU)—all in private capacity.

'THE POST-WAR WAR': Slide show telling how American involvement in Vietnam has changed since the Paris peace agreement was signed in January 1973—Monday 21 January, 7.30 pm in Room S101A, St Clements Building, London School of Economics, Houghton St. Organised by ISC.

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

NOTTINGHAM RED CIRCLES: Wide-ranging series of discussions based on the politics of the Fourth International. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday in the month, 8 pm at the Lion Hotel, Clumber St.

'CRITIQUE' SEMINAR: Jan Kavan on 'The Legacy of Czechoslovakia', Friday 18 January at 7.30 pm in Room S175, St Clements Building, LSE.

'THE IRISH TRAGEDY: Scotland's Disgrace', Pamphlet by John MacLean reprinted by Central London AIL in conjunction with Troops Out

Movement. Available price 12 p plus p & p from RED BOOKS, 24 Boundary Road, London NW8.

STUDENT FORUM: 'Students against the Tories', Monday 21 January, St Clements Building, LSE (near Holborn tube). Speakers: Robin Blackburn, Steve Porter. Organised by London IMG students.

OXFORD & DISTRICT Trades Council conference on the crisis facing working people, Monday 21 January, 7 pm in Buxton Hall, Ruskin College, Walton St. Open to all trades unionists.

FIGHT THE 3-DAY WEEK: Meeting called by Crisis Action Committee (Kensington). Speakers include: Jack Dunn (NUM), Jack Henry (UCATT), member of ASLEF executive, John Tilley (Labour Party). Chair: Mick Martin (Hammersmith & Kensington Trades Council). Monday 21 January 8 pm in Westway Lunch Club (next to Ladbroke Grove tube).

TRADE UNIONISTS AGAINST PHASE 3: public meeting organised by Battersea LPYS. Speakers: Ernie Roberts (Asst Gen Sec, AUEW), Jack Collins (Kent area member, NUM executive), Paul Smith (Industrial Editor, Red Weekly). Friday 25 January, 7.30 pm in 'Cornet of Horse', Lavender Gardens, SW11.

'Lefts' cover up for Labour incomes policy trap

As the possibility of a snap General Election is more and more widely canvassed, a whole mass of propaganda is being churned out to persuade the working class to unite its ranks around the Labour Party.

The justification put forward for this appeal is that everything must be subordinated to defeating the Tories at the next election, and that unity is the only way to achieve this.

To the fore in this campaign is *Tribune*, the weekly paper of the Labour 'lefts'. In the 28 December issue, for example, Michael Foot writes as follows about Reg Prentice: 'Stephen Haseler... is inviting me to engage in full blooded polemic with Reg Prentice. The temptation is strong (sic) but I hope he will understand why I refuse to do so. Such an argument might easily be headlined in the Tory press, particularly at this moment, as the sign of another great split in the Labour Party. No-one but the Tories would benefit.'

What Foot is saying is that he thinks the Tories, and not the working class, would benefit from the exposure of Prentice. And so the latter—who has been carrying out a public campaign against the railwaymen and other workers in struggle—has the field to himself while the 'lefts' stay silent in the name of 'unity'.

NOTHING NEW

This type of thinking, along with big illusions in the line of the Labour leadership, is by no means something new for the 'lefts'. Who can forget, for instance, *Tribune's* description of the 1966 Labour programme: 'The Labour manifesto is not only an interesting and stimulating document. It is also, in essence, a socialist one. The answers are inescapably egalitarian. There is some self-congratulation, but is it not justified?' (11 March 1966).

As for Michael Foot, he declared then that the date of the election 'will mark one of the essential dates in the forward march' (*Tribune*, 25 March 1966). He was, of course, right—it was the forward march to incomes policy, housing cuts, and the *In Place of Strife* anti-union proposals. So what is it this time that the Labour 'lefts' are so eager for us all to unite around?

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The first and most important thing to note is that throughout the present struggles against Phase 3 the Labour leadership has been careful to avoid giving support to industrial action to smash Phase 3 and finish off the Tory Government. While not many have been prepared to go to the same lengths as Reg Prentice, they have nevertheless made their real positions very clear. As long ago as the end of November, for example, Wilson declared in an interview with the *Sun* that, 'I have not supported any particular wage claim'. He then added for good measure that he thought the miners would lose public sympathy 'if they were seriously seeking to bring the Government down by industrial action—when the only means of changing a government in this country is through action by Parliament or a General Election.'

When he carpeted Benn and Prentice for their public feud on 26 November, Wilson stated quite explicitly that Labour could not support any actions against the law—that is, any real attempt to break through Phase 3. Since then, the party leadership has concentrated on trying to convince sections of the ruling class that Labour's subtle methods would be more effective than Heath's brutal ones in bringing the unions to heel. Hence the campaign for the miners to be given 'waiting time' payments (a small enough concession) combined with denunciations of the Government for playing into the hands of the 'militants and trouble-makers'. As Heath continues to apply the big stick, Wilson suggests that the ruling class might prefer his own alternative of frequent small doses of arsenic.

LABOUR MANIFESTO

All these manoeuvres have paved the way for the manifesto which Labour is preparing in case there should be a General Election. Large parts of this have already been leaked to the press, including the section which advocates concessions for the miners—though only as a 'special case'. The real sting, however, lies

in the proposals for an incomes policy. Here we are told: 'After so many failures in the field of economic policy under the Labour Government, and even more seriously under the Tory Government's compulsory incomes policy, only deeds can persuade. Only practical action by a government to create a much fairer distribution of national wealth can convince the worker and his family and his trade union that an incomes policy is not some kind of trick to force him to bear the brunt of the national burden.'

What emerges from all this is that, in return for some action over prices and rents, plus taxes on property speculators and perhaps also on wealth, the trade unions will be expected to co-operate voluntarily in a Labour-imposed incomes policy.

This is indeed a sugar-coated pill—and not a very well disguised one, either. Of course it would be nice to see the property men stripped of some of their profits, but this is not at all the most central question. What is really at



Michael Foot — refuses to expose Prentice

stake is not the outward show of capitalist wealth but the *inner mechanisms of capitalist society*, which produce the horrors of war in Vietnam and of mass poverty, rising unemployment and barbarities such as fascism.

The struggle against capitalism is therefore the struggle to destroy these processes, which are going to work themselves out rather nastily even in the immediate future. Capitalism, not only in Britain but in the rest of the world too, is moving into its worst recession since 1945. The capitalist class will try to solve this problem by shifting the burden onto the working class. Not merely will it not make way peacefully for socialism, but it will demand an extremely high price in return for even small concessions on prices and rents.

In other words, even Wilson's reformist package only stands a chance of being implemented if the ruling class gets something much more important in return. That something else would of course have to be a renunciation of the industrial struggle, the one means by which the working class has managed to protect its standard of living over the last few years. At the moment, the ruling class still backs Heath's big stick. But if all else fails—and it really will be a last option—Wilson offers them another way out

ROAD TO DISASTER

Such are the manoeuvres around which the Labour 'lefts' are now calling for unity. But anyone with any sense will decline to tread this particular road to disaster. On the question of incomes policy, the only unity worth having is around the resolutions already passed by the AUEW and ASTMS, opposing the introduction of an incomes policy by any government. **NO INCOMES POLICY UNDER CAPITALISM**—this is the basis on which working class unity should be forged.

Tribune and the other Labour 'lefts' totally reject this policy, of course, preferring to cover up for the Labour right. Thus they have waged no campaign to put the resources of the Labour Party behind the present industrial struggles; no campaign for Labour councils to use their resources in support of the struggles of the working class. Indeed, they have ignored the one council, Clay Cross, which has played a truly heroic role in the struggle against the Tories. Now these 'lefts' call for 'unity'. But as someone once said: 'You can't fool all of the people all of the time'.

JOHN MARSHALL

SHOULD SOCIALISTS SUPPORT THE IRA?

Dear Red Weekly,

I often read your paper and find your industrial coverage and comment particularly accurate in forging a way towards socialism.

Your perspectives on the miners pay claim were in my opinion excellent (you rightly expose limitations of the Communist Party). But I am disappointed by the way *Red Weekly*, (and the IMG), present the troubles in Ireland. Admittedly you point out to terrorists there is no short cut to socialism, but by heck you still remain under the illusion that the IRA are an asset to the socialist cause.

As a revolutionary socialist I'm shit scared of approaching protestant workers to even discuss socialist theory, because in doing so I'm not only likely to be violently dealt with by the reactionary right of the UDA, UVF etc, but also by those so called 'revolutionaries' of the IRA.

Let me put it to you another way. Leaving bombs in places used by working people (the very working people we must influence to change the system), is not going to win them over to the struggle for socialism. As you have rightly pointed out before, the only people who stand to gain are the Tories and the system of capitalism they uphold. But such actions (no matter what the ideological base) render the IRA a *reactionary* force, contrary to the image you paint.

Because of the low political outlook of terrorists many of these 'prospective' revolutionaries of both sides run protection rackets round the local shopkeepers, 'pay up or else', and it's not just something that goes on behind the scenes, it's in the foreground. The young lads of the 'green tartan' gangs, just like their 'orange' counterparts are about as revolutionary as Colin Jordan and Martin Webster rolled into one.

The *least* socialist republicans should do is to rethink *their whole strategy*, rather than trying to blow protestants into a united Ireland. The real socialist should put at the top of his list the need for propaganda aimed specifically towards the protestant working class. Because they have a reactionary background doesn't mean we should leave them aside. A united Ireland would not be achieved without their support.

BEP, Londonderry.

Bob Purdie replies:

It is necessary to begin by strongly denying one assertion of comrade BEP. It is simply not true to say that revolutionary Marxists face physical danger from the Provisional IRA if they engage in Socialist propaganda in the North of Ireland, as the experience of both the Peoples Democracy and the Revolutionary Marxist Group verifies.

Having said that, the attitude of Marxists to



IRA volunteers during an operation

national liberation movements should not depend on how sympathetic such movements are to socialism. The Mau-Mau in Kenya and Al Fatah in the Arab East have had less in common with socialism than the Provisionals. But Marxists, who are not neutral on the national struggle, have correctly supported them against imperialism.

In those countries where the essential tasks of the national revolution, which prepare the way for a socialist transformation of society, have not been achieved, we support those who fight to accomplish these tasks, even though we might criticise their ideology, and insist that the national struggle can only be successful as an integral element in struggle for workers' power.

LETTERS



This is particularly important in the case of Ireland, because the failure to complete the national revolution in the '20s has meant that the working class, although potentially powerful, is divided and held back from a socialist struggle by partition, and its adjunct, sectarianism.

Cde BEP is mistaken in thinking that socialist propaganda by itself can overcome this division, or win protestant workers over to socialism and/or support for a united Ireland. Propaganda can win individuals, or small groups, to socialist ideas, but it cannot move masses.

Only by understanding this can we make any sense of developments in the North of Ireland over the last few years. Superficially it would seem that since 1968 protestant workers have been driven to the right by the resurgence of the catholic minority. Tendencies in the revolutionary left like the supporters of *Militant*, who never rise beyond abstract propaganda view this with alarm. They demand that the clock be turned back, and that actions which alienate protestant workers be stopped, while they attempt to win them over through propaganda.

To justify their position they usually gloss over certain important facts, and unfortunately cde BEP tends to do the same thing.

It is a legitimate point of view to disagree with, or to condemn the IRA bombing campaign, but it is quite wrong to talk about them 'leaving bombs in places used by working people': the policy of the IRA is to destroy property, and cause disruption through their bombing campaign, but to try to avoid civilian casualties. Obviously mistakes and even serious errors have happened. The Oxford Street Bus Station is a case in point. They should have realised that, at that time, the security forces were likely to engineer large scale civilian casualties for political purposes. Nevertheless their campaign bears no resemblance to the bombing campaign of the extreme loyalist organisations, who indiscriminately bomb pubs, homes and churches, without warning, to kill catholics.

This factual confusion covers a political confusion: namely the idea that protestant and catholic workers have been polarised by the IRA bombing campaign. In fact the polarisation has its roots in the mid-sixties and the O'Neill reforms. As the Civil Rights Movement discovered, reforms challenged the protestant ascendancy, and brought out the violent opposition of the loyalists.

Despite the deepened political gulf between protestant and catholic workers, the struggle over the last five years has brought nearer the achievement of genuine working class unity in Ireland, in other words unity for the common political tasks which face Irish workers, and which include the smashing of partition and the hold of British imperialism on Ireland.

This is because the sectarian institutions which have maintained the status quo over the last fifty years have been seriously weakened. The old Stormont Parliament has gone, the Unionist Party has split, and a political division between the protestant ascendancy and the Union with Britain has plunged protestant politics into unprecedented crisis and fragmentation. Protestant/catholic working class unity is nearer because some of the barriers have been smashed.

This situation would not have arisen had it not been for the military campaign of the IRA. It was this which revived the mass movement which had been driven off the streets by the pogroms of August 1969, and since then military and civil resistance have been closely linked.

There are of course many negative aspects of the Republican Movement. The leadership has not always been successful in excluding petty racketeers, and there is a tendency for 'up the provies' to be taken up on the same level as a soccer slogan. But cde BEP cannot seriously believe that the 'Green Tartans' represent the mainstream of Republicanism.

Revolutionary Marxists must point out the inadequacy of Republicanism when faced with the task of leading a struggle which integrates working class as well as national tasks. But we cannot do so effectively unless we solidarise with their struggle and honestly admit their achievements over the last five years.

In a period of crisis such as the present, the utmost discussion and clarification of ideas is needed in order to chart the way forward for the workers' movement towards the overthrow of capitalism.

We are therefore anxious to hear from our readers on all aspects of the class struggle. Letters should be sent to reach us by the first post on Monday of the week of issue. We reserve the right to shorten letters for publication where necessary.

The British Railways Board has offered its employees a £52m pay deal which the NUR has welcomed as a 'visionary package', while ASLEF, the locomen's union, has rejected every single item.

For the press, the board, and the NUR leadership, the locomen's determination to protect and advance their living and working conditions is entirely regrettable. Much has been made of ASLEF's refusal to recognise what is generally regarded as the declining importance of the men in the cab, and with it their diminishing status. Their action has therefore been presented as a narrow-minded attempt to maintain irrelevant differentials, at the expense of other railway workers, and of course—the long-suffering commuter.

WHAT SIZE CAKE

Sidney Weighell, NUR assistant general secretary, has made no secret of his attitude: 'Basically, ASLEF wants a bigger slice of the cake than anyone else', and he is evidently concerned that his members might be encouraged to demand a re-negotiation of their own allocation.

The fact that the dimensions of 'the cake', neatly encompassed by Phase 3, are not supernaturally determined seems to have escaped Weighell's attention. This, unfortunately, is reinforced by ASLEF general secretary Ray Buckton's position—that what the other unions settle for is entirely their own affair.

The roots of the present dispute, and the undisguised hostility between the union bureaucracies, are rooted in a long history of tension between the two unions, and the technological development of the railway system itself. It is in this context that the issue of differentials takes on a different complexion.

ASLEF was formed in 1880, when the drivers and firemen who handled the steam engines undoubtedly considered themselves an elite corps among railway workers. When J.H. Thomas united three of the railway unions in 1913 to form the NUR, the locomen and the clerks refused to give up their separate organisations.

But solidarity actions were not precluded. In 1919 the NUR went on strike and ASLEF, although it had already made a settlement of its own, called its members out in support. It was in 1924, when ASLEF resisted a proposed wage cut, that the precedent was set for today's spirit of 'going it alone'. On that occasion Thomas condemned the locomen's action and instructed NUR members to continue working. Such memories die hard.

The truncation of the railway system, initial-

Joint action key to ASLEF struggle



Empty platforms — but bureaucrats' strategy leaves 90% of men with nothing to fight for

ly under Beeching's axe, and the replacement of steam by diesel and electric locomotives have taken a heavy toll of ASLEF's membership. Over the past 15 years it has shrunk from 70,000 to 25,000. A significant proportion of this decline arises from an agreement made six years ago to eliminate 'secondmen' from most cabs. Today there are 20,000 drivers and only 8,000 secondmen. Ironically, in the course of the present work to rule, drivers have been demanding to be accompanied by secondmen, which would seem to be not so much a 'rule' as an objective necessity. Train drivers have found themselves almost

classic victims of technological change, which has stripped their job of most of the elements of satisfaction it once offered, and replaced it with a combination of tedium and responsibility, backed up by stringent medical checks which at any time may require a man to retire. Further increases in speed on the businessmen's inter-city lines, and the mounting complexity of the sardine-packed networks, can only add to the strain of the job.

ASLEF has begun to recognise and confront this aspect of profit-motivated development, as Buckton suggested during last year's dispute over the introduction of the Advanced

Passenger Train. Yet the drivers are not uniquely affected by such 'progress'.

Between 1960 and 1970, the number of guards was reduced by 34 per cent; signalmen by 46 per cent; and trackmen by 57 per cent. At the same time, their jobs dramatically changed, through innovations such as automatic signalling, automated marshalling yards, new tracklaying methods, and new ticket machines.

Neither the NUR, with 250,000 members, nor the Transport and Salaried Staffs Association, which represents the white collar workers, has yet reacted to the fact that such developments are gobbling up jobs and often intensifying—not simplifying—the work. Meanwhile, Richard Marsh, chairman of the Railway Board announced last March an anticipated loss of 40,000 jobs and 2,000 miles of track over the next ten years.

Last year, ASLEF demanded that the increased payments the Railway Board offered to the super-speed drivers should be paid to all drivers, specifically to prevent the formation of an 'elite' group. Now, the union is demanding that the offer of £2.25 for 'unsocial hours' also be paid to all drivers, with the addition of appropriate shift-allowances. Its insistence that daily 'distance payments' must continue to be paid at 125 miles—instead of the 200 miles minimum proposed by the board—would benefit the suburban drivers, who stand to lose around £2.50 of the proposed £3.95 increase in basic rates through the 'consolidation' of mileage allowances into the basic. ASLEF has been attempting to discuss these matters with the board for the past two years.

UNITY

The key to the present situation is to put a stop to the present inter-union quarrel and forge an alliance of all railway workers to fight for a better overall deal—a deal outside the Phase 3 limit.

Such unified action can be seen in practice among the London Underground workers, where an unofficial joint trade union action committee exists embracing members of all three rail unions. This body has recently decided to call for an all-out stoppage of London tubes from 4 February unless the Pay Board gives the go-ahead to their £6.3 million settlement with London Transport—equivalent to a 20% rise in total wages.

Joint action between all British Rail employees, and coordination with other groups up against Phase 3, like the London tube workers, the miners and the engineers can win major gains for all railway workers. This must be a central concern of militants in ASLEF, the NUR and the TSSA in the weeks ahead.

RICHARD BRINSLEY

'Wandsworth 3' teachers face new union trial

The second attempt by the National Union of Teachers executive to try the Wandsworth Three, on disciplinary charges arising from the strike rally fiasco last February, is scheduled to begin this Friday, 18 January, at the NUT headquarters.

This follows an unprecedented step by Edward Britton, NUT general secretary, who approached the employers of the three teachers involved—Eric Porter, Fred Scott and David Whiteley—requesting that they be released from teaching duties in order to stand trial. This request, which has been granted by the local education authority, was made without any reference to the Three.

But such practices are very much in line with the tawdry devices the executive has adopted in order to punish those it has designated as the ringleaders of the revolt at Westminster Central Hall against its refusal to lead a struggle on the London allowance claim.

The Three appeared before the union's professional conduct committee in July, but the hearing was brought to an abrupt halt when they refused to be bound to a pledge of secrecy on the trial proceedings. The absurdity of this star-chamber tactic was evident to NUT militants who had already circulated the details of the case, made available by a defence committee.

The executive retaliated by bringing a further charge of 'conduct detrimental to the interests of the union,' and closed the pages of *The Teacher* to any presentation of the Three's case. The trial was finally stopped through High Court intervention, backed up by mounting support for the defendants.

It would appear, however, that the executive's determination to pursue its victimisation campaign to the bitter end has been stimulated by the fact that Fred Scott has now been nominated for national vice-president, and David Whiteley as London member of the executive, in the forthcoming elections.

Further information from: Wandsworth Three Defence Committee, Secretary, Alan Jackson, Flat 4, 697 Garratt Lane, London SW11.

Rank-and-file organise to fight pay laws, free Shrewsbury 3

Sheffield:

A meeting on Shrewsbury last Sunday (13 January), organised on the initiative of the Sheffield IMG, was attended by 70 people, amongst them a number of important convenes from the local engineering and building industries.

After the meeting a Shrewsbury Defence Committee was set up. It decided to plan for a one-day strike on 15 January, to lobby a meeting of UCATT shop stewards to be held on 17 January, asking them to support a resolution calling for national strike action in defence of the Shrewsbury 3, and to mobilise for the re-called Liverpool Shrewsbury Conference.

Wales:

About 100 Welsh building workers and supporters held a demonstration and meeting last Tuesday (15 January) at Ammanford, north of Swansea, to protest at the Shrewsbury convictions.

A resolution, proposed by the IMG and passed unanimously, called for a telegram to be sent to Wednesday's TUC meeting of TU Presidents and General Secretaries stating that: 'This meeting condemns the sentences passed on the 6 building workers at Shrewsbury. It considers this to be part of a co-ordinated Tory attack on the organisations of the working class, and calls on the emergency TUC Presidents meeting to issue a call for extensive national action both in defence of these workers and against the Tory Government.'

Glasgow:

A disappointing turn-out of 400 gathered at the rally in solidarity with the Shrewsbury 3, held on 15 January by the Glasgow Shrewsbury Defence Committee and the Scottish LCDTU.

The rally was chaired by local building workers leader Barry Docherty, who said: 'We are ready, the question is, is the leadership ready to lead a united struggle to get the Shrewsbury 3 out of jail?' T&G official Hugh Wyper said: 'The Transport and General Workers Union will support the Shrewsbury

3 during this campaign. We also have to add the weight of the Shrewsbury campaign to all the other campaigns at present—the miners, ASLEF, the engineers—and challenge the government.'

Kensington & Chelsea:

A Crisis Action Committee has been set up by a meeting of over forty local activists in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, to fight the Tory attacks on working class living standards. The meeting was attended by prominent local trade unionists and tenants leaders.

A public meeting will be held on 21 January (see 'What's On' for details). Publicity for the meeting will include the distribution of 10,000 leaflets and a loud-speaker van touring the main shopping areas on the Saturday afternoon before the meeting.

Battersea:

Battersea branch of the Labour Party Young Socialists has issued a press statement on the problems facing the working class in the present situation. They point to the need for a working class offensive against the Government, and the importance of a victory for the miners in their key struggle. 'We are strong enough to smash through all their bluff,' the statement says, but: 'if we accept Phase 3 ... the working class movement will have suffered a defeat.'

The LPYS has organised a public meeting in South London on 25 January (see 'What's On'), supported by Wandsworth Trades Council and Southwark Trades Council. Speakers will include Ernie

Roberts, Assistant General Secretary of the AUEW, Jackie Collins, Kent Area member of the NUM Executive, and Paul Smith, Industrial Editor of *Red Weekly*.

Coventry:

A rally against the Tories organised by Coventry and District Trades Union Action Committee on 5 January was attended by 100 people. Despite pouring rain they stood for two hours in Coventry Shopping Precinct, and listened to local shop stewards and trade union militants. The speakers stressed the need for industrial action to free the Shrewsbury 3 and get the rest of the charges dropped.

A public meeting organised by UCATT and sponsored by the Trades Council, was held on 9 January. The IMG received a great deal of support at this meeting for their proposal to hold a demonstration in Coventry in solidarity with the Shrewsbury defendants.



International Marxist Group

(British Section of the Fourth International)

182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG and its activities.

NAME

ADDRESS

Women squatters to picket pub

This Sunday (20 January) there will be a women's picket at the New Inn pub, St Johns Wood, at 1 pm. Last Sunday a group of women from a local squat were refused drinks and then beaten up by the police when they attempted to protest. They have been charged with criminal damage, assault, etc. This delightful public house is located at the junction of Allitson Road and Townsend Road, NW8.

Leicester men say 'Smith Must Go'

If you believe in re-incarnation then you may suspect that J.H. Thomas has returned to earth, not to mislead the NUR where Greene is doing such an adequate job, but to bestow his talents on the Leicestershire NUM, where a new-found darling of the mass media has arisen in the person of Frank Smith, secretary of the Leicestershire area of the union and its delegate on the National Executive.

Smith has acquired an unenviable reputation since leaving the Communist Party 30 years ago. For over two years he worked to drive one leading local militant—Martin Ryan—out of the union. Despite Communist Party support for Smith's manoeuvres, legal advice convinced the National Executive that Ryan's thoroughly documented attack on Smith's undemocratic and unconstitutional methods could not be swept under the rug.

In 1972 Smith opposed the miners' strike, insisted on running the area office on a 'normal hours' basis, and publicly attacked Derbyshire miners' flying pickets who were sent in to deal with a suspected breach in the coal embargo, unaware that Smith had actually OK'd coal deliveries.

Leicestershire NUM is a traditional stronghold of 'moderation.' In the ballot that preceded the 1972 miners' strike Leicestershire was al-

most 2/3 against strike action and it has traditionally supported right-wing Labour candidates. Among their proteges is the notorious red-baiter Woodrow Wyatt.

Smith's treachery has exposed the dangerous logic of the 'moderate' standpoint. At last Saturday's mass meeting to discuss the area council's 'no confidence' vote in the secretary—the first Leicestershire NUM has held since 1926—Smith's past came back to haunt him in the form of Martin Ryan, whose fighting attack on Smith's class collaborationism received a standing ovation. The meeting then went on to vote full support for the national overtime ban, repudiate Smith's witch-hunting manoeuvres, and endorse the area council 'no confidence' vote.

Despite this big setback for the right-wing, Smith's hands are still on the levers of power. All the lodges in the area—including traditionally 'pro-Smith' ones—had called for 'no confidence' in Smith before the area council met, but only 4 delegates to the council actually conformed to this mandate, the other 6 choosing to abstain.

After the resounding verdict of last Saturday's mass meeting there should be no further hesitation—the call of 'Smith Must Go' should echo across the coalfield, and Leicestershire miners should begin to prepare for a determined fight, alongside their fellows, against the Tory Government.

Red Weekly

TUC offer on NUM threatens unity

Miners should not be deceived by the 'generous' offer of the TUC bureaucrats not to cite any NUM settlement with the Government in future bargaining over their own claims.

Such an offer means little, and will certainly not satisfy the Tory Government, who will stop at nothing short of a TUC agreement to underwrite Phase 3. At the same time, the TUC's action creates the impression that the miners' demands can only be met at the expense of the just claims of other workers.

Thus this little TUC manoeuvre has the effect of sowing discord within the working class at the very moment when the greatest possible unity is desperately needed. Such a result may be 'unintentional,' but it is an inevitable result of the bureaucracy's central passion at this point

in time: to avoid a struggle with the Government at all costs.

The weeks ahead may unfold in various ways. The Government may continue to negotiate with the TUC and seek firmer commitments. If this is the case, the miners will begin to experience the other side of the collaborator's velvet hand—the splitter's iron heel. For the Government may offer certain concessions in exchange for a TUC sell-out on Phase 3, but it will be reluctant to swallow the entire NUM claim. The TUC—in the best traditions of 1926—would then bring intense pressure to bear on the NUM leaders to accept a compromise package.

The most likely offer—which has already been hinted at by Tory ministers and right-wing members of the NUM executive alike—is a limited wage rise now in exchange for promises of a better deal in future. This

is exactly the tactic employed by the ruling class in the 1920's, when you could always tell a miner by his soup pot full to the brim with promises. The appointment of a full array of cabinet ministers charged with 'energy policy,' under the command of Tory war-horse Lord Carrington, is the latest link in the new chain of servitude which the Government is forging for the miners. A 'say' in the future planning of energy development will be flogged off to the miners in exchange for hard cash, all on an NCB-run H.P. scheme.

The answer to such a proposal has already been suggested by NUM Vice-President Mick McGahey, speaking at last week's Scottish delegate conference: miners must work out their own policies on energy questions and demand that the Government accept them, in addition to the full wages claim. Industrial action should back up these demands to the hilt. Only in this way can the interests of the miners—which have for too long been sacrificed on the altar of the ruling class's 'national interest'—be defended and advanced.

The crucial problem now facing the miners is how to undo the damage being done by their false 'friends' on the TUC General Council. There is only one way to meet this challenge—by showing the rest of the working class that there is another way to back the miners and deal with the Government than the slimy path of sell-out. The miners must give a lead to the entire workers' movement by launching a national strike and calling on every section of workers to join them in a general strike to bring down the Tory Government.

That remains the only road to a real victory. The TUC's course can, at best, only produce some deformed monster which they would label 'victory' on the night of its birth, but which would be revealed in its true shape at the first light of dawn.



Leicester miners give standing ovation to call to get rid of Smith and all on council who refused to condemn him Chris Davies (Report) Chris Baifour

Spanish anarchist faces execution

An international campaign is being mounted to save the life of Salvador Puig, a Spanish anarchist who was sentenced to death on Wednesday, 9 January, for killing a policeman. The appeal entered by Puig, a 26-year-old member of the Iberian Liberation Movement, is expected to come before the authorities very shortly.

The sudden trial and sentence came as something of a surprise, since it had earlier been announced that the trial of Puig and other members of the MIL would not begin until 15 January. Its severity undoubtedly reflects the determination of the regime to intensify the repression after the assassination of Carro Blanco. This is the first death sentence to be handed down since the Burgos trials at the end of 1970, when a number of Basque militants faced execution.

The international response to the Burgos sentences forced the regime to back down and substitute prison sentences instead. The same kind of response is needed if Puig is to be saved. All letters of protest, resolutions, etc. should be addressed to the Spanish Embassy, 24 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QA.

CENTRAL LONDON A.I.L.: Bob Purdie and Gery Lawless on the current situation in Ireland. General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (5 mins Kings Cross tube), 8.00 p.m. Friday 25 January.

Demo will challenge force-feeding of prisoners

The Irish Political Hostages Campaign has challenged the Governor of Wormwood Scrubs to submit to the force feeding his subordinates are carrying out on Gerald Kelly. The IPHC intends to assemble at Shepherd's Bush Green at 2.30pm., next Saturday 19 January, and march to Wormwood Scrubs with the parents of Gerald Kelly, who will be visiting their son. The IPHC will have the necessary equipment and medical supervision to enable the Governor to demonstrate his faith in Home Office statements about the beneficial effects of force feeding.

This will be the first time that his family will have been able to visit since he was sentenced on 14 November. In a statement published by the Irish Times on 11 January, Gerald's father expressed his concern at the treatment his son is receiving. He said that Gerald has been on hunger strike for 56 days, has been unable to walk for 15 days, and has not seen daylight since commencing his hunger strike. Mr. Kelly also revealed that in addition to

the torture his son was suffering, Gerald's 17 year-old wife and her sister were arrested and interrogated for five hours at Springfield Road Barracks in Belfast last week.

The condition of the Price sisters continues to be serious. Bernadette McAisley who visited them on 10 January reported that 'Dolours has changed beyond recognition' and that Marion was a 'shadow of her former self'. Both girls are suffering from severe cramps and pains in the chest (the force feeding tube often enters the lungs by mistake). Due to the damage being done to their throats, the force feeding sessions have been halved to once per day, with a double quantity of liquid. Marion is now vomiting after being fed, as Dolours has done from the beginning, and has a severe pain in her side, possibly due to kidney trouble.

It is obvious by this time that the hunger strikers are not going to capitulate, and that they cannot sustain the daily torment of force feeding much longer. The Home Office, which admits that six prisoners have been permitted to transfer to prisons in the North of Ireland seems to be prepared to let the Winchester prisoners die rather than accede to their request for similar treatment.

The IPHC will be holding a march from Speakers Corner (Marble Arch) to the Home Office next Sunday, 20 January, assembling at 2.30pm. A public meeting, at which Gerald Kelly's parents will speak, will be held in the Lord Palmerston, Kilburn High Road (near Kilburn tube), at 8.00pm.

All of the IPHC activities should receive the broadest possible support, and the Home Office must be bombarded with letters and resolutions from Trade Union branches, and other organisations of the labour movement, demanding that the Winchester prisoners be returned to Ireland.

Picket for MIR leader

Grave concern is being expressed at the possible fate of the deputy leader of the Chilean MIR, Bautista Van Schouwen, who was captured on 14 December. The junta has even refused to admit that they are holding him.

To draw attention to his case, the Chile Solidarity Campaign has organised a picket for this Friday, 18 January, at 1.00 p.m. outside the Chilean Embassy in Devonshire Street (near Baker Street). They are appealing for the widest possible support.

WE'RE HALF WAY TO FUND TARGET

As the crisis continues, the working class movement faces up to its own historic crisis—the crisis of leadership. With everything in the working class's favour, and the possibility of dealing a hammer blow to the Tory Government, the trade union bureaucracy has begun to back away from the confrontation, sweating with fear.

In this situation it is more important than ever for revolutionaries to strain every nerve. We must pound home the necessary steps if the militants are to burst through the bureaucratic barrier.

It was because the IMG understood this that we launched our £2,000 Crisis Fund Drive. Now with the month half gone we are only just creeping up to half-way, with £903.12. Rush in your donations NOW, meet the challenge and put our Fund Drive over the top.

Send to: Red Weekly Fund Drive, 97 Caledonian Road, London, N.1.