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LOYALIST VICTORY

THE ULSTER LOYALISTS HAVE WON. THE two-week general strike has forced Brian Faulkner, leader of the Unionist Party, to withdraw from the 'power sharing' Northern Ireland Executive, leaving only the SDLP holding the rags and tatters of the Sunningdale agreement.

This is the end of British imperialism's present attempt to reform the reactionary Ulster 'statelet' by cooking up a deal between a section of the political bosses, the capitalist Southern Government, and the pro-imperialist politicians in the Catholic community, designed to leave British domination intact. It is the end of 'the Sunningdale formula.'

The loyalists have seized the initiative. It is not yet clear whether they will continue the strike until the British grant new elections, out of which the return of an ultra-reactionary regime along the lines of the old Stormont Government would be certain. But in any event the loyalists have taken a huge step towards this goal.

British imperialism's plans have collapsed. The Labour Government can now either begin the process of withdrawing from political involvement in Ireland, first of all by withdrawing the troops, or, under the cover of 'direct rule,' it can go on handing out concessions to the loyalists allowing them to reconstruct the sectarian institutions which divide Ireland and the Irish working class.

The loyalists are now more fully mobilised and confident than ever before. This means that the catholic ghettos in the North of Ireland face the very real threat of vicious sectarian attacks.

The Government will never smash the catholic struggle which has thrown British imperialism into crisis. But by allowing the army to continue their attacks on the armed organisations of the catholic workers, it increases the risk of sectarian attacks by the loyalists all the time.

British workers must step up the fight for 'troops out.' To physically defend the catholic workers, the loyalist workers must be isolated militarily and politically by the combined political force of the Southern Irish republican and workers' movements and the international workers' movement.

The Southern ruling class, tied as it is to British imperialism will not defend the catholic communities in the North. It refuses to even think about sending the Irish Army to the North and locks up those who actually organise the armed

THREATENS CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

defence of the catholic community—the IRA.

Massive mobilisations in the South are needed to lift the repressive laws against the IRA. The rank-and-file of the army should be urged to prepare to defend the northern ghettos, no matter what orders the Government gives them.

The silence of British workers over Ireland is taken by loyalists as a sign of support, and can only strengthen their confidence in their reactionary course.

The British working class must be mobilised to isolate them politically. It must support the republican cause, as well as stepping up the demand for the withdrawal of troops, and it should prepare to send material aid to the catholic ghettos.

AN 'Ad Hoc Committee for relief to anti-Unionist areas' in the Six Counties was set up last Sunday at a meeting in London attended by delegates and observers from the IMG, International Socialists, Workers Fight, the Revolutionary Communist Group, People's Democracy, and a number of other organisations.

Steps are being taken to set up a central information agency to provide reports on the situation in the North and to begin an immediate political campaign on the issue of relief. A provisional organising committee will co-ordinate moves to get aid and solidarity from the Irish community and trade union movement.

The meeting also decided to approach the Troops Out Movement to discuss practical co-operation on this issue.

A public meeting is being organised by the Committee for Thursday 6 June. Further details can be obtained from 98 Gifford Street, London, N.1. (01-607 7182).

'Threshold' cash for all!

LAST WEEK brought a big shock for Britain's bosses, as the cost-of-living figures triggered the 'threshold agreements' negotiated under Phase 3 not once, not twice, but three times!

The 5 million workers who were able to win this concession thus had the 10 per cent rise in the cost-of-living over the past seven months partly offset by an extra £1.20 in their paypackets. With the cost-of-living rising at the present rate, the threshold will now be tripped at least once a month like clockwork.

This has brought home to the 15 million workers in the country whose paypackets do not have even this limited safeguard the urgency of winning such protection.

The Pay Board has ruled that only threshold agreements negotiated before the next set of figures are published in late June will be eligible for full back-dated payment of the threshold increases. So for many trade unionists the fight is on to force this concession out of their bosses within the next few weeks.

The white-collar union APEX is calling for the negotiation of threshold agreements to cover all its members, and is reported to be considering a series

of one-day stoppages to back up this demand.

In Coventry workers at the engineering firm of Wickman's—on strike for a back-dated threshold agreement covering the entire workforce—are planning a tour of local factories to try and mobilise support.

Moves are already underway in the Coventry factories of the GEC combine to win threshold agreements for the company's 16,000 manual workers.

All workers clearly need immediate protection of their wages against inflation. The TUC should be making immediate plans for concerted industrial action—up to and including a general strike—to force all employers to grant immediate threshold agreements. They should also be demanding that this pro-

tection is extended to cover all forms of state benefit—dole, social security, supplementary benefits, pensions and student grants.

This is the call that should go up from all quarters of the trade union movement. In the absence of such decisive action by the 'leaders' of the labour movement, militants should work towards the maximum degree of united and coordinated action in the struggle for these claims.

Joint plans for national action should be made between all the major unions, joint meetings should be held on the district level, trades councils should be planning local conferences on the fight to defend wages against inflation, and joint shop steward's meetings should immediately be held to plan action in individual workplaces.

Through action such as this threshold agreements can be extended to the entire working class, and a major step taken towards establishing full protection for working people's income against inflation.

SEE 'FOR A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES!' BY ERNEST MANDEL, pp. 4-5.

Nurses step up fight

Labour's decision to set up a special inquiry into nurses' pay has not stopped the nurses pushing ahead with their struggle.

Demonstrations and industrial action continue across the country, and one of the nurses' unions, the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE), has called on its 75,000 members to 'bar non-nursing duties and overtime' in support of the demand for an interim award of £6, pending the report of

the inquiry.

But the inquiry still holds its dangers. All the unions, and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), have accepted the inquiry, despite the fact that it is based on 'special case' pleading which will argue that the nurses are 'different' from the rest of the working class. This manoeuvre by the Labour Government has already succeeded in sowing discord among the nurses organisations, with NUPE and the RCN attacking COHSE's 'irresponsibility.'

(continued on back page)



Last Saturday's demonstration in Manchester in support of the nurses' claim

Photo: MICHAEL WALSH (Red Weekly)

Fascists call demo for day of NUS meeting

THE NATIONAL FRONT has called a provocative national demonstration in London on Saturday 15 June, the day the National Union of Students will discuss its 'No Platform for Racists' policy.

The NUS Executive, in deciding to put down an amendment excluding the 'disruption of meetings,' in implementing the policy, has encouraged the fascists to make this open challenge. The National Front must be answered by a massive re-endorsement of the policy that the ultra-right must be stopped 'by any means necessary' and by a massive counter-mobilisation of anti-fascists from the trade union and student movements.

Militants in Preston set an example last Wednesday (22 May), when they stopped an NF meeting, at which ex-boy Nazi, Martin Webster was billed to speak. Over 200 anti-fascists, from IMG, IS, LPYS, and two local college Socialist Societies, linked arms outside the pub booked for the meeting. The police charged the picket, and arrested two demonstrators, but, in the end, had to tell the NF to cancel their meeting.

There is an obvious need for education about fascism and racism, and the need to smash them. A conference along these lines was organised at Brunel University, West Middlesex, on 18 May, by Hillingdon Trades Council, the local Community Relations Council, and Brunel University Students Union.

There was general agreement amongst the fifty left-wingers and trade unionists present with the NUS 'No Platform' resolution.

A further meeting has been called for 4 June, to discuss practical initiatives by the forces which were united by this conference.

Students at Kent University have 'noted with approval' the NUS policy. At a General Meeting on Wednesday 8 May, they passed by a five to one majority a resolution recognising:

1. That openly racist or fascist organisations such as the National Front, Monday Club pose a direct threat to the organisations of the working class and of blacks because their aims involve the smashing of these organisations.

2. The increased use by the ruling class, both through legislative and non-legislative means, of racism as a tool to divide the working class movement.

3. The nature of organisations such as SPUC and Life who not only have right-wing associations but propagate ideas about motherhood, the family and sexuality that threaten the struggle of women for equality and liberation.

The resolution went on to urge:

That in order to counter these organisations it is necessary to deny them a platform, to prevent any member of these organisations, or individuals known to expose similar views from speaking in the colleges by whatever means necessary.

The resolution also pledged that no fascist or racist literature would be permitted on campus and that there would be assistance for individuals involved in implementing the policy.

This is the kind of militant endorsement which must be counterposed to the NUS leadership's attempts to find an escape-route.

By-election highlights fascist menace

LAST WEEK'S by-election in the East London constituency of Newham South should serve to reinforce the case of those fighting to deny racists and fascists a public platform.

The National Front candidate in Newham South was able to increase his proportion of the vote from the 7% he received in the general election to 12%, pushing the Tory candidate into fourth place.

The low level of political concern in this solidly Labour seat was reflected in a very low turnout of voters—just over 25%. Because of this low turnout the National Front's increased proportion of the votes did not represent an increase in the number of votes it received—in fact this dropped from 2500 to 1700.

But this only serves to sharpen the warning. What is important about the election result is precisely the NF's success in turning out its voters at a time of generally low political interest. Only about a third of those who had voted for the three main parties bothered to vote in this by-election, but more than two-thirds of the NF's voters went to the polls.

This shows that the NF is much more than a flash in the pan. It is



National demonstration on 19 May boosted strike—further action can force T&G to give official backing

NEW SUPPORT FOR IMPERIAL STRIKERS

The strikers at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester remain confident of victory.

The management's sacking of a number of them has not led to a

return to work—they have over half the Asian workers supporting the strike, and confidently expect to get more out.

They are also being supported by Asian shop stewards at other Leicester factories. Benny Bunsee, who is assisting the strikers, told the *Leicester Mercury* that: 'About 1,000 other T&GWU members from factories in Leicester are prepared to take industrial action in support of those at Imperial.'

STRIKERS' DEMANDS

The strikers are demanding higher bonus payments, and an end to management cheating on the bonus scheme, an end to discrimination against Asians, a move towards equal pay for women, and election of shop stewards.

The strikers insist that theirs is not a racial dispute, but a fight for trade union principles. They have rejected a proposed Race Relations Board enquiry into the factory.

However, there is very little support for the strike amongst white workers—who have benefitted from management discrimination—and there has been a shameful attitude to the strike from the majority of the labour movement in Leicester. The Leicester Trades Council, for instance, has refused on a technicality to hear a spokesman from the strike committee.

ROLE OF UNION

Many people have commented on the strike's similarities to that at Mansfield Hosiery Mills, and unfortunately the role of the Transport and General Workers' Union here has been very similar to that of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers at Mansfield.

The T&G conference passed a splendid resolution against racism; but the record of its local officials at Imperial stinks. The District Secretary Mr. George Bromley told the strikers that there was no question of making the strike official since they had not gone through the

proper channels. But he himself has refused to call a branch meeting until the 'atmosphere is cooler,' i.e. until the strike is over.

Reg Weaver, the convenor at Imperial—who has refused to accept nominations for Asians for shop steward posts—told the *Leicester Mercury* on 9 May that he 'would be prepared to talk to anybody except Mr. N.C. Patel, and Mr. Hasnukh Khetani [two of the strike leaders], who he said had terminated their contracts and were no longer employed by the company. Now that all the strikers have been sacked, Weaver can't talk to them either.'

CALL FOR ENQUIRY

When the strikers marched on the T&G offices on 17 May, Bromley's advice was simple: 'get back to work.' He told them that the vast majority would be allowed to return when he made representations to the company, but that there must be a considerable number which the company will not re-engage under any circumstances.

The strikers are in revolt against this bureaucratic domination. At a special meeting of the 5/221 branch of the T&G, called on 10 May despite Bromley's refusal to convene it officially, they decided that unless Bromley and Weaver support their demands they will elect a committee at the next branch meeting to enquire into their conduct.

The state of affairs in branch 5/221 must be looked into by the T&G; and the democratic right of the Asians to elect shop stewards must be guaranteed. Other T&G branches must demand that this strike is made official and that an enquiry be launched into the behaviour of the local officials.

The strikers will be organising a lobby of Transport House in London, this Friday (31 May) at 11 a.m. If the T&G does not act, then the resolution it passed at its last conference against racism becomes a joke—and a joke in very bad taste.

Andrew Jenkins

Donations and messages of support to: Imperial Strike Committee, 42 Hunter Road, Leicester.

Mass picket planned for Essex trials

There will be firm action to defend the 104 students who were arrested on the picket lines at Essex University in March. This was decided by a General Meeting of the Essex Students Union on 23 May.

The meeting accepted an IMG proposal for a mass picket of trade unionists and students when those arrested appear in court on 24 June. It also agreed to encourage student unions throughout Britain to take solidarity action on that day.

The Communist Party and 'Broad Left' supporters argued for a token delegate picket outside the court, but the majority of the meeting agreed with an IMG comrade who said:

'The attempt of the University administration and the police to smash the students' ability to organise for better conditions is a sign of what is in store not only for students but for the trade union movement. A massive response to student pickets being dragged through the courts must be generated throughout the whole

labour and student movements.'

The meeting also agreed to organise a speaking tour of other student unions, and to prepare a pamphlet on the case. This will deal with the whole sequence of events at Essex since the occupation in November for lower rents and prices, and better facilities. It was this occupation which sparked off the administration's disciplinary action against 35 students.

The Union's delegates to the NUS conference on 15 June were mandated to fight to get the NUS Executive to initiate a national campaign in defence of the 104, and any other students victimised for their part in the grants campaign.

The meeting also decided to end the picket which had blockaded the trades entrance to the University since the expulsions of students began three months ago. The mass picket won the re-instatement of two of the expelled students, and has made it impossible for the right wing of the University Senate to push through even tough-

er disciplinary procedures.

The students felt that the picket had been weakened by the continued police attacks, and that with the nearing of exams this particular tactic had achieved as much as it could at this stage.

But the struggle is by no means over. The Union has committed itself to action if the third expelled student is not re-instated following his appeal in two weeks' time. It will also continue the boycott of the University store.

As one militant explained: 'The increase in the grant, won by actions like those at Oxford, Essex and Kent, is no good if prices continue to rocket. We must maintain our fight against higher prices on campus.'

Enquiries and requests for speakers should be sent to: The President, University of Essex Students' Union, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex (phone: 0206-44244).

Kathleen Francis

FUND DRIVE Let's shock 'em

The police picked up and searched a London IMG member on the way to the bank this week. As a result, they know what was collected for the Red Weekly Fund Drive in London.

Let's give them a big shock next time. Let's show that we can fight for our politics, and get the resources to back up that fight.

Rush your money to: Red Weekly Fund Drive, c/o 97 Castonian Road, London N.1.

So far we have received: Ford's - £6.60, Camden - £5.90, Hackney - £4.70, Lewisham - £3, Wandsworth - £4.19, and Kilburn - £21.

WHY SUNNINGDALE COLLAPSED

THE SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT has collapsed of its own contradictions. It consisted of a series of intricately linked illusions, and when one of these was seriously challenged its downfall was inevitable.

Wilson and his Irish Secretary Merlyn Rees had based their strategy on the assumption that what was happening was just a rough patch in the implementation of Sunningdale, and that if they balanced delicately enough between the contending forces it would pull through.

For this reason they were reluctant to take decisive action against the loyalist strike, only being pushed into half-measures by the SDLP. This reluctance was most clearly demonstrated in Derry when workers were trying to get to work without the benefit of Len Murray, and his TV cameras. The Army refused to dismantle loyalist barricades, and even fired rubber bullets at the

workers when they refused to disperse!

The crisis of Sunningdale reflected the split in Unionism based on the conflict of deep-rooted economic interests. The sections of the bourgeoisie whose investments are most tied up with British capital support Britain's attempts to reform the State, and move towards a new deal with the South of Ireland. But there is a vast social layer based on small capital, tied up in family businesses and small farms. They oppose reform, and want to maintain the old status quo.

PROTESTANT WORKERS

Separate from these two groups is the protestant working class, which holds a virtual monopoly on the skilled jobs, and has benefited from the privileges dispensed by the protestant ascendancy. Their domination by sectarianism, and total lack of any independent working class political tradition means that these

workers can only act within the terms of reference set by one of the two main bourgeois blocs. It was their almost inevitable support for the anti-Sunningdale forces which doomed the plan from the start.

At the Assembly elections the Faulkner Unionists, on an ambiguous platform, won about 50% of the identifiable protestant votes. But as the implications of the British White Paper on the future of the North became clear, and the power-sharing Executive was formed, Faulkner's support crumbled. He lost control of the Unionist Party, and then had a general election thrust upon him by the crisis in Britain. He won a mere 20% of the protestant vote.

Meanwhile, at the grass roots the loyalists were re-organising, and a new tougher leadership was emerging. In February 1973 the Loyalist Association of Workers had called a one-day strike against the White Paper. In a confrontation with the British

Army five men were killed, one of them a protestant fireman. The protestant population sank back in disarray—they were not prepared for such a confrontation with the Army.

BOLD ACTION

At this point the pro-Sunningdale forces had their most favourable opportunity to win over the protestant workers. But they did nothing, apart from a weak appeal during the General Election, by Sandy Scott of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. He urged the protestant workers to give up part of the ascendancy, in return for the British patronage necessary to maintain Northern Irish heavy industry.

But it was far too late. The Ulster Workers Council had already arisen from the ashes of LAW, and 'hard men' of the clandestine Ulster Volunteer Force had stiffened the backbone of the open para-military organisations such as the Ulster Defence Association. With the 'moral' victory of the general election the loyalist workers were ready for bold action.

The current general strike was initiated by the loyalist workers, but in a close alliance with loyalist middle-class and bourgeois forces. When it became clear that the protestant middle class was behind the strike, Faulkner had little choice but to resign.

Catholic opposition to Sunningdale had also grown steadily. The SDLP, in the absence of any substantial Republican challenge at the polls, won 83% of the catholic vote at the Assembly elections, representing 22% of the total poll. They won 23.2% of the total poll at the general election, but they received a substantial proportion of middle-class, pro-Sunningdale, votes. Their electoral support amongst catholics actually declined.

But the real politics of the catholics are expressed in the streets. They voted SDLP only because they hoped for immediate relief from the British Army and internment.

BLATANT REPRESSION

Instead the repression has never relaxed, and the efforts of the

Army to root out the IRA have succeeded in uniting the catholics behind the Republican Movement.

The capitulation of the SDLP on the question of the full implementation of the Council of Ireland was probably their last fatal mistake. It was presented as a concession to the loyalists, but it was nothing of the kind. Faulkner was never in favour of the full Council. He wanted to maintain as much of the old set-up in the North as the British Government would accept.

The Dublin Government knows that it cannot solve the crisis in the North and will strenuously oppose a British pull-out. Despite the bombings in Dublin and Monaghan, the increased repression against Republicans and the broad popular resentment over such issues as the Price sisters, there is no significant opposition to the pro-British policies of the Coalition and the main opposition party Fianna Fail.

If there is a pogrom against the catholic ghettos in the North, there could be broad mobilisations, demanding that the Government assist the catholics. But it is unlikely that this would seriously undermine the Coalition's strategy.

NEXT TO LAST CRISIS

Whatever the Labour Government's response to the present crisis, it will be followed by a new explosion of catholic opposition.

If the Army breaks the strike the catholics will be encouraged by the defeat of the loyalists, who would be fragmented and demoralised, and probably rendered incapable of further resistance.

If they try to sit out the strike until it collapses of its own contradictions, there will still be mass support behind a renewed Republican offensive.

If they capitulate to the strikers, they will not only spark off flaming resentment amongst the catholics, but they will also undermine the position of the Southern Government.

The present crisis is probably not the last in the 800 years of Ireland's British problem—but it could be the next to last.

BOB PURDIE



Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

The Price sisters — as well as four other Irish prisoners on hunger strike — are now in a critical condition. The latest situation was outlined at a press conference on Monday night by (l to r) Mrs Feeney (mother of hunger striker Hugh), Claire Price (sister of Dolours and Marion), and Mrs Price. A picket calling for the hunger strikers' repatriation to Ireland is being held every night at 6 pm outside Roy Jenkins's house in Ladbroke Square, W.11, and there will be a rally and march this Sunday, starting from Speakers Corner at 3 pm.

THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

- how to build it

GAVIN ROBINSON answers some objections raised on the left.



The 'Troops Out' demand has been taken up by reactionary elements—the left will be tainted if it does the same.

If muddled reactionaries make this demand it is because of the success of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. Their scream of pain is the first sign of a possible split in bourgeois politics. We must fight their anti-Irish chauvinism, but try to widen that split, and use the heightened interest to get across our reasons for getting the troops out.

A British withdrawal would eliminate a powerful barrier to the advance of the Irish struggle, and make it easier to destroy the Southern ruling class, and the Orange ascendancy.

If reactionaries want the same thing, that is their contradiction, not ours.

The TOM will inevitably come up against the problem of its attitude to the armed struggle. It must immediately adopt the position of solidarity with the IRA.

It is self-evident that it is not necessary to support the IRA in order to support the withdrawal of the troops and self-determination for Ireland, especially when this is not

invited on the basis of the repressive implications for workers in Britain of what is happening in Ireland.

It is true that such a campaign inevitably raises the question of the IRA, but it also enables that question to be answered. Bringing into focus the links between the Irish struggle and the struggle of the British working class makes it much easier to get workers to understand why the IRA deserves our support.

The TOM will win more people to solidarity with the IRA in six months, than the 'solidarity first' merchants have done in four years. Yes, we should have a troops out movement, but it should demand that the troops are replaced by a workers' militia, based on the trade union movement, in the North of Ireland.

When the people who support this argument define the political aims of a 'workers' militia' we will be able to tell whether or not it is a serious proposition.

If it aims to advance the progress of the Irish people towards national freedom and socialism, it will have to fight the majority of trade unionists in the North of Ireland, as recent events show.

If it defends the privileged position of the loyalist aristocracy of labour, which is what the majority

of trade unionists in the North of Ireland want, it will have to fight the advance of the rest of the Irish people.

The best way to get the Army out is to weaken it from within, by working for trade union rights for soldiers.

The best way to get the Army out, is by helping deserters to escape from its clutches.

The struggle for civil and trade union rights for soldiers is an important means of undermining the army as an instrument of class rule. But there is no reason to assume that soldiers thrown into the Irish holocaust must go through the stage of trade union consciousness before they break with the army.

It was the experience of the factory which led to the growth of trade unions, the army is a quite different proposition. Because of the way in which discipline operates, and because soldiers are deliberately cut off from the rest of society, opposition usually takes the form of individual action.

That means that desertion is a more realistic proposition than building a trade union for most soldiers who reject the Army's repressive role in Ireland. But unless soldiers believe that they will have a future which is more tolerable than continued service, no significant

numbers will 'vote with their feet' against the Irish war.

That means that what happens outside the Army is at present more important than work aimed directly at the ranks of the Army. If, in addition to the blows struck by the IRA, soldiers come to believe that large sections of public opinion in Britain no longer support the Irish war, the 'cop-out' rate will increase dramatically.

So at this stage we should concentrate on work outside the Army, although anyone who decided to prepare now to assist deserters would be doing a valuable job.

The main demand should be a Bill of Rights to guarantee democratic rights to the minority in the North of Ireland.

We should be demanding the repeal of the Emergency Provisions Act, which is the basis for most of the repression in the North of Ireland.

If the Labour Government cannot even enforce the full implementation of the Council of Ireland, who is going to enforce the Bill of Rights?

History has shown that Northern Ireland cannot be reformed. Any diminution in the sectarian basis of the State challenges the very reason for its existence. The civil rights move-

ment in the late sixties proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the only road to progress was the smashing of the Northern Ireland State.

And since the British Government cannot accept the destruction of the State, the role of the British Army is to stand in the way of progress. That is why the Emergency Provisions Act was passed, and the Bill of Rights rejected.

Clearly those who now counterpose the Bill of Rights to the demand for troop withdrawal have failed to draw the lessons of history. Their failure over five years to make any impact on the British labour movement underlines the futility of their position.

But there are people who want to combine the troops withdrawal and the Bill of Rights demands. It would be sectarian for the TOM to reject joint work with such people, in building support for the withdrawal of the troops.

But the position of these people is contradictory. In the final analysis, the demand for the British Government to legislate reform is neither practical, nor compatible with the complete withdrawal of British imperialism from Ireland, which is the logical outcome of the TOM's demands of troops out now and self-determination.

The fight to win threshold agreements for all workers

In this article ERNEST MANDEL examines the most effective way to win

FOR A SLIDING SCALE

PERMANENT INFLATION is one of the principal characteristics of capitalism in decline. It is by means of inflation that present-day capitalism tries to prevent inevitable, periodic crises (today modestly called 'recessions') from developing into crises of catastrophic proportions such as the one of 1929-32.

It would be pointless to try and name the 'main' agent responsible for inflation. The ruthless profiteering of the monopolies? The armaments trade? All these aspects of present day capitalism have their place and are intimately linked with one another.

Dangerous illusions would be spread if workers were made to believe that the dragon of inflation could be vanquished if finance ministers who are the 'monopolies' lackeys were replaced by 'progressive' finance ministers; or if the 'politics of disarmament and detente' were followed through; or if 'profit margins were reduced'.

The unpleasant truth is that there is no way of halting inflation without suppressing the capitalist system. The only conditions in which contemporary capitalism, if really pushed, could moderate inflation would be conditions disastrous for the working-class: massive unemployment and the freezing of wages. But experience has taught, that even in this case, the infernal inflation engine would only slow down, and not come to a stop.

INCOMES POLICY

A particularly pernicious idea that is expounded by bourgeois experts and taken up by the reformist wing of the labour movement is that workers must be prepared to make certain sacrifices to stop inflation, as it hits them harder than any other class in society. This piece of mystification produces concrete measures: incomes policies and the compulsory limitation (or one made with the consent of the trade union bureaucracy) of cash wage increases, supposedly matched by a 'control' of prices and bosses' incomes.

In practice, the bourgeois state can only effectively control wages—and this only if the unions and the workers let them do so. No bourgeois government has so far succeeded in effectively reducing prices or profit margins. In the capitalist economy, the bourgeoisie has a thousand different ways of cooking its books, of manipulating profits and of raising prices, in spite of all the legal measures of a 'freeze'. The scarecrow of 'prices and profits control' is only put up to cheat the workers, to push them on into exchanging their birth-right—the freedom to negotiate wages with the bosses, backed by their organised force—for

a mess of pottage.

Inflation is undoubtedly a sickness whose effects hit the workers. But the workers must not sacrifice their immediate interests on the altar of the 'fight against inflation', for that would mean becoming caught up in a redistribution of national income to the detriment of wage-earners and to the advantage of capitalist profits.

All incomes policies that claim to control 'at the same time', wages, prices and profits, inevitably become, under capitalism, a means of policing wages, pure and simple. Workers and unions must reject, unconditionally and without reservation, any appeal to a 'fight against inflation', because it is a weapon of capital in the class struggle against labour.

Inflation will be finally throttled when capitalism is overthrown and workers hold economic and political power. But until then, the task is not to sacrifice workers' interests in the name of an abstract principle ('limiting inflation') but of defending workers' buying power against the effects of inflation.

Sliding Scale

Seeing that inflation is inherent in capitalism today, capitalists, in spite of all their anti-inflationist airs, strive for one thing only: that the advantages of inflation fall into their strong-boxes, while the workers pay for its costs. The attitude of the working class and its organisations must be diametrically opposed to these persistent efforts (often successful) on the part of capital; they must aim at a complete refusal to pay for the costs of inflation, and try to protect their real wages against all its direct and indirect effects.

Since it was founded in 1938, the Fourth International has defended the idea that only the sliding scale of wages constitutes a real defence of workers' buying power against the consequences of inflation and the rising cost of living. Resisted by both reformists and for a long time ultra-leftists, this idea has nevertheless been applied by the working-class through-

out the world. Examples of struggles for the sliding scale, either within single firms or branches of industry, or on a national trade level, are numerous. Experience has shown workers that the defence and protection of their buying power through use of the sliding scale represents the first (and most indispensable) means of self-defence when faced with the more and more rapid rocketing of prices.

The argument according to which a sliding scale would 'defuse' the workers' struggles, through removing the stimulus for a fight for wage increases, is contradicted by practice. Countries like Italy or Belgium where a sliding scale is in operation, either in whole or in part, are certainly not places where the number of strikes and other struggles is lower than that of countries where the workers do not yet enjoy a sliding scale. In reality, a sliding scale does not act as a substitute for struggles over wage increases. On the contrary, it creates the necessary conditions for such struggles. What is today, in the age of permanent inflation, called 'a struggle for wage increases' is nine times out of ten, an attempt to catch up with the rising cost of living, that is to say, it is a struggle to re-establish and not to increase the buying power of wages. When this 're-establishment' becomes an automatic process, through contracts guaranteeing a sliding scale, then the struggle for real increases in buying power can begin.

EXPERIENCE

The experience of many collective contracts, in many industries and several countries, shows that in the age of permanent and accelerating inflation, any delay in the adjustment of wages to the cost of living is synonymous with a fall in the buying power of wage-earners. The Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the very conservative University of Louvain in Belgium has calculated that Belgian workers, even though they enjoy a sliding scale, have still lost 3% of their buying power in the last two years, due to the fact that wage adjustments have not kept pace with the price index.

To be sure, an automatic adjustment of wages to prices each time the latter rise above a certain 'threshold' level is a step in the direction of a

sliding scale that mustn't be dismissed. But these measures do not yet represent an effective sliding scale properly speaking. In the first place because any price increase lower than the threshold does not lead to any wage increases, even though it of course means a loss of buying power for wage-earners. Secondly, because it constitutes a real invitation for Governments and the bourgeois state apparatus to manipulate the official price index, keeping it just below the threshold that would set off an automatic adjustment of wages.

A true sliding scale thus means the automatic adjustment (say each month) of money wages to all price increases, without the interference of any kind of threshold limitation. In this way, the integrity of workers' buying power can be preserved, as the Belgian gas and electricity workers have shown after their last wage negotiations.

Taxation and State benefits

However, for this integrity to be wholly safeguarded, the effects of taxation upon workers' buying power have also to be taken into account. At one time, the labour movement stood by the notion that indirect taxes hit poorer people more, where-



Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

NALGO workers have sought to close gap through

as direct (income) taxes tended to hit the rich. The first part of this notion is still correct to-day but the second is less so. The growing burden of direct taxation in the last decades has above all operated through increased taxes upon wages and salaries. At present, in a lot of capitalist countries, workers not



Mass meeting of Wickman's strikers in Coventry decides to continue struggle for back-dated thro

Urgent tasks face Clay Cross conference

by JOHN MARSHALL

THE CONFERENCE called by the Clay Cross Labour Party for London on 8 June will be the first big meeting of rank-and-file socialist and trade union militants since the general election.

Everyone knows that the fall of the Tories and the success of the miners' strike were big victories for the working class. They created a perfect opportunity to put the boot into the bosses and take decisive steps towards socialism. But, as so often in the past, a Labour Government is wasting the fruits of this hard-won victory.

DISGRACEFUL POLICIES

Apart from the disgraceful policies it has adopted on Clay Cross, the Government is allowing warships to be sent to the bloody Chilean dictatorship, and a Labour minister, Michael Foot, has become the new watchdog of the Tories' Phase 3 incomes policy. The AUEW, faced with a vicious attack from the NIRC, was advised by this same minister to give in and attend the court, and the six trade unionists

jailed at Shrewsbury remain in prison.

Of course there are many more problems facing the working class than can be dealt with at a one-day conference: the need to campaign for the withdrawal of troops from Ireland; the fight for equal pay; the fight to protect wages from inflation; the struggle against racism; the struggle for the nationalisation of the key sections of the economy.

But the conference organisers have put some of the most important questions on the agenda. On each and every one of these decisive action can and must be organised.

CLAY CROSS: the fight of the Clay Cross councillors served as a beacon for all those engaged in the fight against the Tory Government. The campaign to lift the surcharges and other penalties imposed on the Clay Cross councillors must be stepped up, and must be linked to the fight for decent housing for all, which tenants associations and squatters groups are waging across the country.

Local Labour parties, trades councils, and other working class bodies should link up with these groups to immediately get underway a cam-

campaign of demonstrations, strikes, and direct action to demand:

- * immediate lifting of all penalties imposed on the Clay Cross councillors
- * scrapping of all rent increases imposed under the Housing Finance Act
- * expropriation by direct action, with the co-operation and support of Labour councils, of all property in the hands of speculators to provide decent housing for all those in need
- * a crash building programme of new council houses

SHREWSBURY AND THE NIRC:

the fight to free the Shrewsbury 6, and the struggle of the AUEW against the NIRC, are both attempts to reconquer the basic rights of trade unionism which came under attack from the Tory Government. The Labour Government has shamelessly retreated from this fight, in its decision to uphold Phase 3, in its refusal to free the Shrewsbury prisoners, and in its back-down on the question of the picketing laws in the face of Tory and Liberal Parliamentary opposition.

has become an urgent one for British trade unionists. Effective way to protect workers' incomes from inflation.

SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES!



Struggle for London cost-of-living allowance

only pay for most indirect taxes, they also pay the majority of direct ones. This is all the more true now that direct taxes on wages and salaries are usually paid in full by the bosses to the State, before workers themselves receive any wages, whereas taxes on capitalist profit and on the incomes of those in the so-called 'liberal',



Agreement

Photo: Workers Press

(especially Belgium) is the complete indexing of the scales of taxation upon salaries. Each time the nominal salary is increased to make an adjustment to the rising cost of living, the tax-scale is increased by the same percentage.

For example, if the ceiling on wages and salaries for which a tax of 15% is paid is 25,000 Francs, it would automatically rise to 27,000 Francs, if the cost of living increased by 10%.

DIFFERENTIALS

It is sometimes objected that through the use of such a common indexing of salaries, wages and taxes, the gap between the lowest and highest wages, while remaining the same *proportionately*, continually increases in *absolute* figures.

Two replies can be given to this argument. First, it is only right to limit the tax indexing to a definite ceiling, based upon the incomes of skilled workers. In the above example, it could for instance be supposed that the indexing of tax-ceilings upon wages or salaries would stop at 30,000 Francs a year. Beyond this ceiling, incomes would be hit even harder, thus reducing somewhat the gap between low and high wages.

After this, the best way of fighting the excessive gap caused by differences in income levels, is to struggle for cost-of-living allowances, end of year bonuses, and for *true wage increases* (beyond the sliding-scale's sphere of application) *that are the same for everyone* on the basis of equal pay for equal work.

The real struggle against excessive differences in wages and salaries cannot be waged by limiting the sphere of application of the sliding scale, but only by winning allowances and wage increases that are equal for all. It is in workers' interests to have a simple sliding scale, simple and automatic, that will prevent them from being ground under and losing their buying power. A sliding scale serves *this* end, and not the fight against the inequality of incomes for which other weapons have to be used.

SOCIAL ALLOWANCES

What is, on the other hand, indispensable for the protection of the whole working class against the

effects of inflation (and not just workers at work) is the extension of the principle of the sliding scale for all those who receive supplementary benefits and other social allowances. Superannuations or pensions, sick and unemployment pay, family and child allowances etc must also be indexed and automatically adjusted to the increase in the cost of living in the same way as wages and salaries should be. This demand is all the more necessary when small wage-earners on fixed incomes are the most hard hit by the rise in prices of essential goods, and are thrown into poverty by inflation.

The Index

As soon as workers have gained a sliding scale for wages, the centre of gravity of the struggle to prevent the working-class from paying the costs of inflation shifts towards the *calculation of real price rises*. Everywhere, bosses and the bourgeois State try to get accepted an index of prices (or of the cost of living) established by the public administration system, as the base upon which wage adjustments can be calculated. Everywhere, experience has shown that these indexes are faked and only help bosses slow down wage adjustments, that is, to increase capitalist profits.

The means most widely used by the bourgeoisie to reach this end are

1. The dishonest doctoring of the goods that are taken into account when calculating a cost of living index. In effect, this monthly index is an average arising out of the fluctuations in prices of a large number of goods and services. If one lets slip into the total mass of these goods a series of articles that are hardly ever consumed by workers and whose price increases are lower than the average, an index will be obtained that does not honestly reflect the real rise in the cost of living. Thus, the Belgian trade union movement has for a long time denounced what it calls the 'top-hat index' because goods such as top-hats were taken into consideration when calculating the cost of living index.

The same type of dishonest manipulation can be seen in the exclusion from any cost of living index of services whose costs increase particularly fast—e.g. in some countries, rent and medical charges not subsidised by social security—or to include them but to give them less weight than they actually have in household budgets.

2. The dishonest selection of real prices. In capitalist society the same articles are often sold at widely divergent prices; this is especially so for foodstuffs. To continually select the prices of such goods in places where working class households do not on the whole do their shopping (e.g. in markets) produces a price-index which has very little to do with the actual expenditure of working class households.

3. The manipulation of the overall outcome of the index through holding back the price of certain articles. This is known in Belgium as 'the politics of the index' and is only profitable for bosses and the bourgeois State if there are thresholds beneath which no wage adjustments can take place. If this threshold is fixed at 2%, for example, a government can, by arbitrarily blocking the price of certain widely consumed goods (e.g. bread), artificially maintain the index at 1.9% or 1.8%, thereby creating for some months a loss of buying power on the part of workers of up to 2%.

VETO

This fiddling of the index is so blatant in countries such as Italy or France, that functionaries from the various Institutes of Statistics have even denounced it themselves, and have offered trade unions their help in calculating an 'honest' index.

In Belgium, the unions have won the right to veto any officially recognised index. Sitting on a 'price commission' next to the bosses and the government's representatives, they can refuse to recognise as valid the index published each month by the government. But this 'suspending' veto has a purely propagandistic value, as it does not mean that the increase in salaries that a more honest index would produce are automatically obtained.

Trade union calculations of the monthly level of prices shouldn't be carried out in the shadows of offices, even if they are union offices. Information on prices should be collected by teams of housewives and workers, in the shops, through *price-control committees*. This information should be publicly discussed and debated before the working masses. To associate the mass of workers now with the application of the sliding scale is to ensure later the widest based working class democracy and the real self-organisation of workers when they have won political power and overthrown the capitalist system.

'independent' professions are paid afterwards and without any real control. Thus the bourgeoisie gains twice over. First by paying taxes late they benefit from the loss of buying power of currency—a fixed amount of tax on a capitalist profit paid six months after its realisation is a tax lowered by 5% if the rate of inflation is 10%. Secondly, to pay taxes without any effective control on the real amount of profits opens the flood-gates to tax evasion and fraud.

The graduated scale of tax upon wages means that each time the sliding scale causes money wages to rise to an income level that is more heavily taxed than the one beneath it, the increased tax payable is greater than the wage increase itself.

What interests a worker is not 'gross wages', a purely fictional notion, but *real net wages*, that is to say the total amount of goods and services which he can effectively buy with the money he gets at the end of the week. A sliding-scale must safeguard the buying power of pay actually received and must in some way offset the effects created by increased taxation.

A solution demanded by the labour movement in several countries

Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)



demo last November—Clay Cross conference must take active steps to build further action

A massive campaign must be mounted by the labour movement to *smash all anti-union laws*. This must involve the widest range of mass action—including industrial action—leading up to a general strike, if this is necessary to force the Labour Government into action and to defeat the manoeuvres of the ruling class and its political parties.

This campaign should demand:

- * immediate scrapping of the Industrial Relations Act and the NIRC; all NIRC judgements, and all cases before the NIRC, to be wiped out; immediate repayment of all fines levied by the NIRC
- * immediate scrapping of Phase 3, and no laws restraining wages
- * immediate release of the Shrewsbury 6, and a full pardon for all those convicted in the Shrewsbury frame-up trials
- * enactment of legal measures to abolish the conspiracy laws and guarantee the right to picket

CHILE: the immediate task is to build the biggest demonstration possible on Chile for the anniversary

of the coup in September, and to strengthen the blacking campaign. In order to do this, the entire labour movement should cooperate in the establishment of local branches of the Chile Solidarity Campaign in every area.

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

One question which, while not on the conference agenda, will nevertheless run through all the debates, is that of *working class democracy*. The open flouting by the Labour Government of one conference decision after another makes the urgency of this question obvious.

The struggle for workers' democracy—both in the trade unions and in the Labour Party—will be a crucial one in the coming months. Among the central things that must be fought for are:

- * rank-and-file control of the unions and all union officials
- * subordination of the Labour Government and the Parliamentary Party to Labour Conference
- * the ending of all bans and prescriptions in the Labour Party

* for the establishment of democratic bodies representative of the rank-and-file (mass meetings, strike committees) to take charge of those struggles in which workers are involved

All the tasks involved in the fight around these issues cannot be sorted out simply by a one-day meeting. The Clay Cross conference must issue a call for the convening of similar conferences on a local level to work out a practical plan of action for carrying the fight forward.

Such meetings—representative of the entire workers' movement, including trade union bodies, local Labour Parties, the Communist Party and the revolutionary left—would provide a powerful launching pad for getting the struggle for socialism underway, and be a practical demonstration of the effectiveness in action of workers' democracy.

The conference will be held in Central Hall, Westminster, starting at 11 am on Saturday 8 Jan.

For further details or credentials contact: Charlie Bunting, 7 Lynam Close, Danesmoor, Clay Cross. (Tel: 0246-862756)

PORTUGAL

The mass upsurge and the revolutionary left

THE REFORMIST and right-wing policies of the Portuguese Communist Party—its refusal to launch a mass campaign against the colonial wars and its open and uncritical support for the military junta—have created a vacuum on the left which is rapidly being filled by various revolutionary organisations.

The revolutionary left has in the past been dominated by various maoist currents with predominantly local influence, such as Grito do Povo (the People's Cry) in Oporto, and the MRPP (Movement for the Reorganisation of the Party of the Proletariat) in Lisbon.

The most active and dynamic of these groups today is, without doubt, the MRPP. They are a Portuguese re-incarnation of Stalinism, and claim as their inspiration the thought of Mao Tse-Tung and Albanian President Enver Hoxha. Their principal slogan, continually chanted in demonstrations, calls for 'Bread, Peace, Land, Liberty, Democracy, National Independence'. According to them the time is not ripe for socialism in Portugal, so we must be satisfied with admiring Maoist China and Albania (the 'beacon of socialism in Europe') from afar.

BIZARRE

The MRPP has certain bizarre doctrines. I heard with my own ears the main theoretician of this group coolly explain to a mass meeting that 'the Portuguese people have oppressed the colonial people for 5 centuries', that important sectors of the Portuguese working class are growing fat on the back of the colonial people, that this explains the passivity of the Portuguese proletariat towards the fascist regime and so on. In addition, the MRPP exhibits a sweeping sectarianism towards the Communist Party. I myself saw on the walls of Lisbon the slogan 'shoot the revisionists', signed by the MRPP. Happily, for the moment, the guns are only imaginary.

This having been said, the MRPP militants have a remarkable dynamism and 'punch' in action. They are conducting an uncompromising campaign against the colonial wars, particularly among the soldiers, and the front ranks of their demonstration on 1 May were made up of dozens of soldiers and sailors in chains.

They have organised spectacular actions to prevent the departure of new troops for the colonies, and recently managed—with the co-operation of the families of the draftees—to prevent ten soldiers from boarding an aircraft for Africa. The reactionary officers hate the MRPP and intend to wipe them out at the first opportunity.

Two other, smaller, revolutionary groups are closer to the positions of the Fourth International and work



Part of the massive May Day demonstration in the city of Oporto

fraternally with the Portuguese Trotskyists, the LCI (International Communist League):

1. The URML (Revolutionary Union, Marxist-Leninist). For them the socialist revolution is on the agenda. The URML carries out quite important work among certain sections of workers and is attempting to create a revolutionary current in certain unions.

2. The PRP (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat). A small, although vigorous, group, but mainly made up of students and intellectuals. The PRP has close connections with the famous 'Revolutionary Brigades' which carried on guerilla actions against the army and police of the Caetano regime.

TROTSKYISTS

The LCI, a sympathising organisation of the Fourth International, is the first Trotskyist organisation in the history of Portugal. Founded a few months ago at a secret conference, it is at present the only organisation of the far left established on a national level, in all the main centres. In Oporto the LCI is primarily working class in composition and carries on intense work in the factories and work-places. Our comrades are more and more active in student mobilisations in Coimbra, a university town, while their main central political actions are carried on in Lisbon.

Despite their relatively small numbers, the comrades of the LCI have made a spectacular 'explosion' onto the political scene in recent days. First on May Day, by organising and leading (in collaboration with the URML and the PRP) a revolutionary contingent on the united demonstration of the workers' movement in Lisbon. Grouping together only a few hundred militants and sympathisers at the start, the contingent distinguished itself from those of the reformists by its red flags and slogans: 'power to the workers', 'immediate

independence for the colonies', 'bring back the soldiers', 'down with capitalist exploitation', 'socialist revolution'. In no time at all about 10,000 workers, soldiers, sailors and students joined the 'red' contingent, attracted by its militancy and its clearly anti-colonial and anti-capitalist stand.

PROVOCATION

Inside the stadium where the meeting of the left was held our comrades approached the platform to ask for the right to speak. Not only was their request refused, but the Stalinist stewards physically threatened the revolutionary delegation. Rejecting this provocation by the bureaucrats, our comrades left with thousands of demonstrators and held a revolutionary meeting nearby. A military truck decorated with red flags served as the platform (and the soldiers took part in the meeting). A communique from the LCI describing the events was sent to the press and published by the main Lisbon dailies.

On Sunday, 5 May, the LCI mobilised its forces to support a demonstration called by anti-colonial students and African immigrant workers. This was the first mass demonstration of African immigrant workers in Portugal's history. At its head was a big banner proclaiming 'Not one soldier more for the colonies'. The march proceeded through the popular districts where the African immigrants live, and the inhabitants joined the demonstration in large numbers. The comrades of the MRPP also took part.

The march ended with a meeting in the main square in central Lisbon, le Rossio, where African militants took the platform to denounce the crimes of colonialism and the neo-colonial manoeuvres of the Portuguese bourgeoisie.

VANGUARD

Militants from the LCI also spoke,

perched on top of the pedestal of the statue of the venerable Emperor Dom Pedro V of Portugal (covered from head to toe with the hammer and sickle). They stressed the identity of interests between the exploited masses of the colonies and the Portuguese proletariat, in their struggle against a common enemy: colonialism and capitalism.

By these two initiatives, widely commented on by the Portuguese press, the LCI have already established themselves as one of the main organisations of the revolutionary vanguard, despite their relative youth.

While continuing its work among workers (particularly successful in Oporto), the LCI considers one of its central tasks at the present time to be the struggle against the rotten colonial war. It plans to carry this out within the framework of a united front of several far-left currents, which is in the process of being set up.*

This campaign will reinforce not merely the solidarity between Portuguese and African workers, but also that between workers and soldiers. It will allow revolutionaries to enlarge their audience within the armed forces and push forward the self-organisation of the soldiers and sailors. CARLOS HENRIQUEZ

* The first such joint action took place on Friday 24 May, according to the Paris daily Le Monde, when the LCI, the URML, and the PRP—together with two other groups, the LUAR (League of Revolutionary Unity and Action) and the 'Socialist Base'—held a joint meeting in the Coliseum in Lisbon.

The next day saw another joint action by the same groups, when over 5,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of the capital calling for an immediate end to the colonial wars and the independence of the African territories. At the head of the march were a number of soldiers and sailors in uniform, carrying red flags, and many African workers also took part, carrying banners in support of the PAIGC, the MPLA, and FRELIMO.

A DEMONSTRATION in solidarity with the liberation movements in the Portuguese African colonies is being planned for Sunday 16 June.

Called by the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guiné, the demonstration is receiving support from a broad range of left groups, including the Portuguese Workers' Coordinating Committee, the International Marxist Group, the International Socialists, the Communist Party, and several Labour

Portuguese colonies --- solidarity demo planned

constituency Parties.

The demands so far agreed on for the demonstration include immediate independence for the Portuguese colonies, no aid for Portuguese colonialism, recognition of the Government established in Guiné by

the liberation forces, and solidarity with the Portuguese people.

The overthrow of the fascist regime in Portugal was in large measure due to the heroic struggle of the African liberation movements, for whom outright victory is now

just around the corner.

Such an immense victory would be a devastating body blow to the white supremacist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia. At the same time a victory in the colonies would weaken the conservative forces in Portugal itself and strengthen the struggle of the Portuguese workers and peasants.

For these reasons the 16 June demonstration deserves the full support of all those in Britain who are committed to the fight against imperialism and capitalism.

Notes from the struggle

The new Portuguese Government is trying to block workers' struggles by the enactment of a national minimum wage of £55 a month (not to include agricultural or domestic workers, or soldiers), coupled with a freeze on all wages over £125 a month.

With inflation in Portugal running at about 30% a year, this involves a major attack on the gains of all better paid workers.

But this policy was no sooner enacted than it met a vigorous challenge with the launching of an all-out strike by Lisbon Transport workers—some of whom, at least, are in the 'frozen' wage range.

Despite the destruction of the old regime, censorship is not yet dead in Portugal. A special committee still exists to vet all news articles concerning military matters. For this reason nothing appeared in the Portuguese press about the departure of two troop ships for Africa last week, nor about the fact that many of the soldiers due to be shipped overseas refused to embark.

Another case of the continuing censorship occurred during the television coverage of the gigantic May Day rally. The speaker from the metal workers' union made a fighting speech—in sharp contrast to the milk-and-water oratory of the Socialist and Communist Party spokesmen—pointing out the fundamental conflict of interests between workers and capitalists, and calling for the beginning of a struggle for socialism.

However, the TV coverage of this speech (and this speech alone) was obliterated by the playing of the Portuguese national anthem over the broadcast.

Ernest Mandel, prominent spokesman of the Fourth International, recently concluded a successful visit to Portugal. His meeting in Lisbon attracted an audience of over 2500.

A reminder of which class is in power in Portugal came last week when the organisations of the revolutionary left organised a united front demonstration. Some 4000 people turned out, but the army promptly moved in and broke the demonstration up, using tear gas.

MAY DAY COMES TO HONG KONG

'We are the working class but we have no May Day'. So began a leaflet distributed among the working population of this British colony on 1 May by the 'Hong Kong Anti-Inflation Action Committee (HKAIAAC) and the 'May Day Workers Commission' (MDWC).

The distribution of this leaflet was a direct challenge to the Maoist 'Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions' (HKFTU), which with 66 trade unions and a membership of 130,000 is the most powerful workers' organisation in Hong Kong.

from S.S.WU

Whereas the HKFTU had confined its celebrations of May Day to a few cocktail parties, the leaflet put out by these two groups called for a mass rally the following Sunday, 5 May, to protest at the decline in workers' living standards.

The last two years have seen a dramatic rise in workers' militancy. An unprecedented number of strikes have swept the colony. But these have mostly been spontaneous. As a bourgeois liberal weekly, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, recently

commented: 'The HKFTU has long been quiet, doing little in the way of agitation or strike organisation since the aftermath of the 1967 communist riots.'

In this situation, sections of the rank-and-file in the Maoist unions are now beginning for the first time to question the line of their leadership, which puts the trading and diplomatic interests of the Chinese bureaucracy ahead of the interests of the workers it is supposed to represent. The rapid growth of the HKAIAAC and the MDWC reflects this new critical mood.

The HKAIAAC is jointly organised by two revolutionary Marxist youth organisations—the International Young Socialist Alliance and the 'Daily Combating Bulletin' group. These two are currently working towards fusion. The MDWC was recently formed as a group specifically for young workers, and is organised and led by the 'Daily' group.

The HKFTU first attempted to deal with the growing attraction of these groups by denouncing them as an 'ultra-leftist tendency' in the workers' movement. When this had no effect, the Maoists were forced in late April to announce their full support for the ongoing workers' struggles.

But already many workers regard such passive 'support' as completely insufficient. As one leader of the 1967 riots told the 'Daily' group: 'What the HKFTU should put forward is a *plan of action* to defend the interests of the working class!'

This discontent led to an enthusiastic mobilisation for the 5 May rally. At first the colonial police tried to ban it, but this move was denounced on all sides. Among the first to protest was the Asian College Students' Union of the Chinese University.

MOBILISATION

Preparations for the rally continued without interruption, in any case. Posters written in huge characters were pasted up on the walls of public buildings and factories. Slogans were painted everywhere. A million leaflets were run off for distribution. Mobile propaganda groups appeared on the streets in defiance of the strict colonial laws.

Finally—rather than risk a serious confrontation—the police backed down, and on 1 May approved the application for the rally.

Thousands of workers attended the 5 May rally. But as one of the organisers, Leung Chun Kwong of the HKAIAAC, explained at a press conference two days earlier: 'This is

only the first action of the Anti-Inflation Movement. Similar larger rallies will be held throughout May.

'If the Government is still indifferent to the deteriorating economic situation, comparatively more radical actions will be organised in June. For instance, mass protests and parades will be held in working class districts or at Morse Park [the centre of the industrial zone]. Should the Government continue to passively ignore our actions, a general strike by the workers and students will be prepared.'

NO IDLE BOAST

Six months ago, such a threat would have seemed an idle boast. Last October, for instance, the revolutionary Marxists were too weak to carry on alone when the united front Anti-Corruption Movement split into reformist and revolutionary tendencies. [The Anti-Corruption Movement was set up after former Hong Kong police superintendent Peter Godber had fled to England to avoid corruption charges involving four million HK dollars (about £330,000). He was arrested in Sussex on 30 April, and extradition proceedings are currently under way. Bail was set at £365,000!]

But much has changed in the last six months. Today the Maoists have to admit that in this short period the revolutionary Marxists have become a force to be reckoned with, both among the students and also increasingly in the workers' movement.

As one leading member of the 'Daily' group put it: 'In Hong Kong, May Day comes very late. But it comes, anyway. And the most important thing is that when it comes it will stay here.'

Such a development will be strenuously resisted, however, by the British Government. Hong Kong is an imperialist paradise, where British capitalists along with American, Japanese, and expatriate Chinese firms make huge profits from exploiting the 98 per cent Chinese population. Between 1960 and 1967 the rate of return on capital invested rose from 20 per cent to 35 per cent. The majority of workers are expected to work a 12-hour day and a six or even seven-day week.

CORRUPT REPRESSION

This exploitation is backed up by one of the largest (and most corrupt) repressive forces in the world. The Government spends five times as much on the Royal Hong Kong Police (whose officers are recruited in Britain) as it does on social services, for instance. And in the background of course, are the troops (annual military expenditure on Hong Kong was recently estimated by the *Economist* at £40-50 million).

So if the spirit of May Day is to stay in Hong Kong, it will not be without a fierce and protracted struggle. But in this struggle, at least, the British labour movement has it in its power to play a very direct role in support of its Chinese brothers. We must make sure that in the event it will do so.



Part of the demonstration called by the Confederation of Iranian Students, which last Sunday demanded that the Labour government expel Ali Abdul Jhanbin, a secret police agent attached to the Iranian Embassy, who spies on Iranian dissidents in this country. SAVAK, the Iranian secret police, is one of the most repressive and vicious police outfits in the world and at a meeting this Friday, 31st May at Imperial College, S. Kensington at 7.00pm, its role will be fully exposed and discussed.

What's On

LONDON RED FORUMS: New series dealing with basic questions of Marxist theory. Every Tuesday at 8 pm in 'General Picton', Caledonian Road (5 mins Kings X tube).

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER: All-London meeting for everyone interested or involved in the campaign, Saturday 1 June, 10.30 am to 1 pm in University of London Student Union Building, Melet Street, WC1. (Goode St tube). Creche facilities provided.

SUPPORT THE NURSES! Public meeting with speakers from London Nurses Co-ordinating Committee, Saturday 1 June at 2.30 pm in University of London Student Union Building, Melet Street, WC1. Organised by Working Women's Charter Campaign.

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

TEACHERS RED FORUM: 'Strike Now!', with strikers from Gerrard Green and Clissold Park schools. Monday 3 June at 8 pm in Golden Lion pub, Kings Cross Road (5 mins Kings X tube).

CHILE: Public meeting with Tariq Ali, Cllr Ken Holmes (Labour Party), Roy Morgan (EPTU Convenor, Whitehead) and Welsh Nationalist speaker, Tuesday 4 June at 7.30 pm in The Talisman pub, Commercial Street, Newport, Gwent.

FREE IRELAND FORUM: 'The British Dirty Tricks Department—Littlejohn, Lennon and Marks', speaker Gerry Lawless. Friday 31 May at 8 pm in General Picton, Caledonian Road (5 mins Kings X tube).

SOCIALIST WOMAN FORUM: Cathy Adams on the nurses' struggle, Wednesday 5 June at 8 pm in the Earl Russell pub, St Pancras Road, NW1 (Kings Cross tube).

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

LIVERPOOL RED BOOKS: Revolutionary literature—Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Eastern Europe, Third World, Ireland, Women's Liberation, 91a Renshaw Street, Liverpool. Tues-Fri: 12.30-3. Sat: 11-3.

'WOMEN'S LIBERATION in Eastern Europe', public meeting sponsored by 'Critique', speaker Margaret Coulson. A discussion of the position of women after the revolution, and how it has worked out in practice in Eastern Europe. Friday 31 May at 7.30 pm in Room S 175, St Clement's Building, London School of Economics.

KILBURN IMG RED CIRCLE: 'Portugal and the Colonial Struggle', Wednesday 5 June, 8 pm, in Flat 7, 36 Canfield Gardens, NW6 (Finchley Road tube).

'WOMEN AND SEXUALITY': Harrow/Hillingdon Socialist Women's Group Forum, Monday 10 June at 8 pm in Harrow Baptist Church, College Road, Harrow—further details from Jackie, 01-204 3558.

IMG GAY GROUP: Contact J. Mills, 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds for further information.

TWO IMPORTANT FILMS of historic trade union events—'Inheritance' and 'Adalen '31'—at 5.15 and 7.45 pm on Sunday 9 June at Bradford Playhouse and Film Theatre, Chapel Street, Bradford 1. Discussion at 6.20 pm led by Ken Appleby, Secretary, Keighley Trades Council. Admission 60p. Pies and beer available after 7 pm.

SOUTHALL RED FORUM on the situation in Ireland, Friday 31 May at 8 pm in the Featherstone Arms, Featherstone Road, Southall (near Dominion Cinema).

'LONDON TEACHERS—WHAT NEXT?' Rank & File meeting, Friday 7 June, in Old Lecture Theatre, London School of Economics, at 7.30 pm. Speakers Beth Stone and Dick North, newly elected members of NUT National Executive.

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER: Public meeting organised by Birmingham WLM to form action committee, Thursday 20 June, 7.30 pm in Digbeth Civic Hall. Creche provided.

SAVE THE PRICE SISTERS! Picket of Roy Jenkins' house in Ladbroke Square, W11, every night at 6 pm to demand repatriation of hunger strikers to Ireland. Also mass rally Sunday 2 June at 3 pm, Speakers Corner (Marble Arch tube).

PICKET WINSON GREEN PRISON, Birmingham, Sunday 9 June, to demand release of Patrick O'Brien and public inquiry into Special Branch activities in the Lennon affair. Organised by Irish Political Hostages Campaign.

LONDON WORKERS' FIGHT FORUM: Andrew Hornung on 'The Second International, Revisionism, and the Mass Strike Debate', Sunday 9 June, 7.30 pm, 'Golden Lion', Britannia St., near Kings Cross.

INPRECOR

the french elections

in this issue...

INPRECOR is the new analytical journal of the Fourth International, which will be published simultaneously every two weeks in English, Spanish, French and German. It will be an indispensable organ for all militants hoping to develop an understanding of the international class struggle and contribute in the building of a centralised revolutionary International. However it can only survive if it has a large number of subscriptions. A year's sub. is £3. Write now, with money, to: INPRECOR, 12/14 Rue de la Baanderie, BRUSSELS 1000.

Fourth International holds European Workers' Conference

'We are taking a first step. A step that is needed more and more. A step against the Europe of the trusts and monopolies.'

With these words Ernest Mandel opened the European workers' conference organised by the Fourth International in Ghent last weekend.

The conference was the first stage in preparing for a real 'parliament of European labour' to take place early next year. Five hundred trade union militants from 12 different countries discussed how to forge in practice the international links necessary to face the growing power of the international combines.

Five commissions were held in the course of the conference: on repression (where a major discussion took place on the Shrewsbury trials); ways of organising for struggle; inflation; the fight against redundancies; and immigrant workers. More than 60 militants were able to speak, exchange experiences, and begin to draw out the essential lessons.

Time and time again, the same key points emerged: the need for offensive tactics such as factory occupations; the importance of involving the mass of workers through general assemblies and elected strike committees; the need to prepare workers' self-defence against police and fascist strike-breaking squads; and so on.

The contrast with the meeting at the same time of the European TUC in Copenhagen—where the leading bureaucrats of each country discussed how they could best paper over the yawning gulf between the interests of capital and labour—could hardly have been greater. In Ghent the first steps were taken to forge a real workers' leadership. The bureaucrats may be redundant sooner than they think.

PAUL SMITH

International Marxist Group

(British section of the Fourth International)

97 Caledonian Rd., London N.1.



I would like more information about the IMG and its activities

NAME

ADDRESS

HAMILTON HOUSE, headquarters of the National Union of Teachers, was occupied by 500 militant teachers, lobbying the union's Action Committee on Thursday 23 May, to protest at their failure to call a strike for the London Allowance.

A meeting developed between militants from all over London, who discussed the next steps in the struggle. IMG militants argued that a committee based on those militant schools which have taken strike action was needed to co-ordinate the struggles.

The IMG proposal was accepted on a majority vote, against the position of IS, who wanted their 'Rank-and-File' grouping to fulfil this function.

A number of ideas about how to carry the struggle forward have emerged. Teachers in Holland Park Comprehensive are advocating mass resignations from London schools. This kind of determination to fight is just what is needed at present, but the weakness of this particular plan is that such action would not bite until schools restart in September.

Prentice, the Education Secretary, has been waving the magic wand of the 'Social Contract' in an attempt to forestall action. He has said that a 'substantial' increase in the London Allowance is on the way, has offered an extra £10.8 million to schools in exceptional difficulty and has promised a complete review of all teachers' pay by Christmas 1974. In addition, teachers will benefit from the threshold agreements.

But teachers' problems are not simply ones of pay. Prentice himself has said that it will be impossible to eliminate classes of over 30 by 1980. The Labour Government is still carrying on with the cut in educational expenditure of £180 million imposed by the Tories. Building programmes have been slashed, full and part-time staff, including teachers and ancillary workers, laid off, and less money is being made available for books and equipment.

Cuts in Government expenditure have brought workers in education, local

STRIKING TEACHERS SEIZE UNION HQ

government and hospitals into struggle. It is necessary to build an alliance of these militants at the level of the rank-and-file, and to raise the question of the attacks on the social services within the working class movement.

Trade Councils in Wandsworth, and Colchester have already taken this up, and NUT branches in Leeds and Sheffield have plans to call open conferences on the crisis in education.

These conferences should not simply look at the problems which workers in the social services face, but should begin to campaign throughout the whole working class for action. The dockers who plan strike action as part of the fight to save Poplar Hospital, and the Camden action-backed enquiry into property speculation are examples of what is required.

London teachers are in an excellent position to take up all these questions. The meeting on Thursday took an important step in placing the organisation of

the struggle in the hands of an Ad-Hoc Committee, representing the militant schools but open to all who want to take action. A democratically elected strike committee is essential to prevent the struggle being controlled and sold out by the union bureaucrats. It is absolutely different from 'Rank and File' which is a political grouping within the union and does not embrace all of those prepared to struggle. The failure of the International Socialists to understand this will result in them adopting a manipulative attitude toward the strike. Already the IS, despite having opposed the setting up of the committee, have nominated one of their members as its convenor.

Many schools are simply waiting for a lead. The next step for the Ad-Hoc Committee is to set a date for strike action, and begin the practical tasks of organising the necessary material and physical support to conduct the struggle.

JIM DONOGHUE



Militant teachers hold meeting inside occupied NUT headquarters

Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

Computer strike spreads to rest of Britain

THE STRIKE of Scottish University computer staff, now in its third week, threatens to become an open confrontation with the Pay Board, and to escalate into a national strike.

The computer staff are demanding the implementation of a previous agreement re-grading them as technical staff (which would strengthen their future bargaining position), and a backdated settlement, which would give them a substantial sum of money. They have rejected a compromise proposal, which does not concede these points.

The Pay Board has turned down a claim won by local action at Edinburgh University in February. This settlement basically meets the demands of the striking computer staff.

The Pay Board's refusal is on the

basis of a technicality which might not apply elsewhere, but it is likely to discover other 'technicalities' in other cases as well.

As a result of a unanimous ASTMS conference decision, the strike is being extended to the rest of Britain. Staff at many universities, who have been involved in fruitless negotiations for months, are now beginning to take action.

At Bath University computer staff responded to a sham offer—similar to the one made to Scottish staff—by blacking work for the administration from 3 May. The University responded by sacking the eight computer operators and calling in agency labour.

The victimised workers received massive support from the students and from the NUPE, the main union on the campus, which offered to strike in solidarity.

The Students Union called a half-day stoppage on Tuesday 20 May, and pickets turned away all deliveries to the University. The struggle was extended to take in other aspects of the cut-back in educational expenditure, and a boycott

of the refectory, supported by ASTMS and NUPE, was started by the students.

The administration backed down, re-instated the computer staff, and offered fresh negotiations.

Unfortunately the ASTMS convenor persuaded the computer staff to call off their action, thus relaxing the struggle. However, if no concessions are made within a week of the resumption of negotiations, there is likely to be an occupation.

In Scotland the strike is hitting heavily. At Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, computer staff have begun an occupation and strike.

Stirling University, halted in most departments, has already approached the computer staff with a local offer. The operators have refused to go back unless they have the approval of staff at every University now on strike.

To guarantee that pressure to call off the strike will not leave one of the weaker sections of the computer staff stranded it is necessary to fight for:

- National negotiations for a settlement, binding on all universities.
- No settlements to be referred to the Pay Board.
- The Labour Government to back this action, overriding any Pay Board decision to block payment.
- No victimisation.

JOHN BALL

Red Weekly

NURSES ORGANISE!

Over 1,000 nurses staged a demonstration in Manchester on Saturday. A large contingent of 'para-medical' hospital staff (professional staff like radiographers, etc.)—who are not directly involved in the nurses' struggle—took part.

IMG militant Geoff Ryan brought a message from the Altrincham TASS-AUEW branch calling for other workers to strike in support of the nurses.

Nurses at King's College Hospital in London elected a Joint Nurses Action Committee last Monday. The Committee includes nurses in NUPE and NALGO, AUEW and TGWU shop stewards from the hospital, and a representative of the medical students' union.

The Action Committee is calling a mass meeting of nurses for today (Thursday) to mobilise for the 6 June national nurses' demonstration and to work out a plan of action on the claim. Plans under discussion include a ban on work with agency nurses.

Nurses have already been delegated by the Committee to speak at ancillary workers' union meetings, and links are being established with nurses at the nearby Maudsley hospital where nurses, ancillary workers and doctors struck for an hour last Wednesday. Maudsley nurses were planning to strike again for two hours yesterday (29 May), in line with COHSE national action.

It is hoped to coordinate action in the two hospitals and organise a joint march through South London to the national demonstration on 6 June.

The hospital administration have adopted a policy of trying to intimidate militant nurses, but they have been warned by AUEW shop stewards that they will shut down if there is any attempt to

victimise nurses for taking action over the claim.

Nurses at Northwick Park Hospital in the Harrow area are holding a mass meeting at the entrance of the hospital today (Thursday). They hope to involve other workers and local students.

A public meeting, sponsored by the Harrow Trades Council, Harrow Students Union, the IMG, and the local Socialist Women's Group, is also being organised for today to set up a support committee in the area.

Over 200 nurses from West Wales Hospitals and students from St. Davids College, Lampeter marched through Carmarthen on Sunday.

At the rally which followed the speech of local Labour MP Gwynor Jones was in sharp contrast to the words of nurses' spokeswoman Sister June Morris.

Jones told the nurses, 'I know militancy has paid off in the past with the miners but it doesn't always work.' He advised them to wait for the result of the Government's inquiry.

Sister Morris said that the time had come to struggle, and warned the demonstrators to beware of a sell-out by the bureaucrats on the Whitley Council.

A Union General Meeting at Sheffield University has passed a resolution supporting 'the nurses' action for a £100m. pay settlement and any industrial action taken by the trade union movement to ensure that the nurses' claim is met in full.'

The resolution goes on to commit the union to take part in any support committee set up by the local labour movement, asks medical students not to cover for nurses on strike, and urges students to take part in demonstrations in support of the nurses.

NURSES

(Continued from front page)

The COHSE action points the way forward, but no one should have any illusions in the COHSE leadership. The COHSE bureaucrats remember the loss of membership they suffered when the union decided to register under the Industrial Relations Act. Now that they have reversed this action, they see the possibility of gaining ground on the other health service unions through adopting a more 'militant' stance.

But COHSE General Secretary Albert Spanswick has publicly stated that they would settle for an interim rise of £4 or £5, rather than the full demand of £6, and the only effective moves to forge a way forward are coming from the rank-and-file.

In many areas nurses action committees have been set up to direct the struggle. As one London COHSE member told *Red Weekly*: 'The action committees were set up to unite the nurses at rank-and-file

level. We should use these to win the support and action of other nurses.'

The action committees should be used to draw in all those committed to the struggle, irrespective of whether they are in COHSE, NUPE, the RCN or whatever, and build on the COHSE action.

They should decide on manning levels and emergency provisions while industrial action is in progress, should coordinate with other hospital workers, and should make every effort to gain support from other sections of the working class.

The opportunities created by COHSE's rotating strikes should be used to free nurses to organise such support (through factory gate meetings, leafletting, demonstrations, etc.).

It is moves such as this that can win the nurses' claim in full, and strike a major blow in defence of workers' health care standards.

NALGO NATIONAL ACTION HIDES LONDON RETREAT

NALGO's Executive decided at its meeting last week to initiate action for the union's 20% national pay claim. This follows the employers' refusal to negotiate on the claim while action is still going ahead on the London Weighting struggle.

The union is calling for a national overtime ban and is planning a one-day strike on 1 July if negotiations have not started.

Although the NALGO Executive is starting to move on the national claim it has definitely stepped backwards in London by instructing Islington branch to go back to work from Monday 3 June. The bureaucrats claim to be still 'escalating' action by spreading the small-scale selective strikes, but they are refusing to bring out any other branches. This is a

recipe for fragmentation and demoralisation, not a realistic perspective for struggle.

It is still possible that Islington will continue its defiance of the bureaucracy by staying out until effective all-London action begins. The instruction from the executive follows union secretary Geoffrey Drain's failure to persuade the branch to go back last week. If Islington stays out, widespread support must be developed both to boost their struggle and to compensate for the removal of strike pay.

The latest developments open up a national perspective of struggle for both the London and the national claims. Linked extensive strike action all over the country could swing the balance against the employers' manoeuvres and the bureaucrats' pussy-footing tactics.

Islington is in the process of contacting other union branches in London to discuss the carrying forward of action. This kind of initiative is now needed in other areas so that support for the London action can be extended, and the one-day protest strike turned into more effective strike action. With the nurses now coming into struggle the possibility of forming joint action committees to fight for all the claims must be seized on by militants in every area.

ALAN BENNETT