

Socialist Worker

FOR WORKERS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

160 26 FEBRUARY 1970 EVERY THURSDAY 4d

WAGES REVOLT SNOWBALLS

Thousands do this to bosses and government

by Chris Harman

IN INDUSTRY after industry over the last few weeks masses of workers have been learning the lesson — militancy pays.

Not only workers who have usually been willing to fight for improved living standards, but also those who for so long seemed content to accept whatever miserable conditions the bosses offered.

Before Christmas there were strikes by dustmen, gravediggers and threats by firemen.

Since then there have been strikes by section after section of workers that have rarely, if ever, shown such militancy before: the continuing action by teachers, the first-ever stoppages by Post Office clerical workers, the spontaneous walk-out by more than 20,000 women that has closed the Leeds clothing industry for the first time since the war.

Falling

For four years and more ordinary people have faced rising prices, rents and rates and unparalleled fares increases. At the same time 'incomes policy' and wage freeze have prevented any corresponding increases in wages for many workers. The result: falling living standards.

Those who work in industries that have not been well organised, that have no tradition of militancy or have felt themselves 'above' industrial action in the past have been particularly affected by the incomes policy.

The government would only admit to exceptions to its policy when workers accepted productivity bargaining. This has meant that for the millions covered by such agreements the cost of maintaining real wages against rising prices has been an increased tempo of work, increased supervision from above and increased weariness.

The unemployment level indicates the consequence of such a policy for at least 600,000 other workers.

The present spate of strikes and wage claims is evidence of the first stirrings of rebellion among whole sections of workers against these impositions. They feel that they have put up with enough and that with the balance of payments now in surplus, the government can afford to let them have a wage rise.

They see from the success of other groups that direct action can get them rises. And they are right.

Surplus

Such is the absurdity of the big business system that if a government forces down living standards, pushes up prices, increases the incidence of rickets among children by cutting down on free milk and increasing the price of school dinners, creates unemployment and stops the economy from growing for a couple of years, at the end of that time the balance of payments is 'in-surplus' and the country is deemed prosperous.

By following such policies, British big business has been able marginally to improve its position in international markets. As a result it is now slightly less worried by the prospects of wage increases.

The government, with an election approaching, is unwilling to engage in any major conflict with the

unions. In any case, Chancellor Roy Jenkins has made it clear that if things get out of hand, he will continue to keep living standards in check through his Budget in April.

This means that at present militant trade unionism can force up wages. And certainly those workers who do not engage in such action will get little.

But this situation is unlikely to last for long. British capitalism still has not solved its basic problems.

If its exports have grown slightly this has been because while world markets have expanded and while wages costs of some of its competitors (France, Italy, Germany) have been forced up by strikes, it has been able to cut costs by speed-up and wage freeze and by keeping total production almost stagnant.

These small improvements could rapidly disappear — particularly if the American recession predicted by so many economists takes place.

That is why it is probable that whichever party wins the election the wage restraint policies of the last four years will be taken up again. The present period will then seem like a brief interlude in which workers could improve their material situation without too much effort.

There is a clear precedent for this at the time of the last election in 1965. In the months before the election, with the deficit in the balance of payments halved, Harold Wilson felt able to promise 'one of the most massive programmes of social and economic reform in our long parliamentary history' (9 November 1965).

At the same time he warned that the Tories would 'put up the cost of food and... destroy the welfare state and replace it with the Means Test State' (13 March 1966).

Severe

These promises were short lived. After the second biggest Labour election victory, what followed was the denunciation of the seamen's strike in June, the most severe deflation of the British economy since the war in July and the start of four years in which conditions for whole sections of workers were to suffer more than at any time in a generation.

The lesson for us to learn is clear. Now is the time to press our economic demands. Action now can bring results not possible a year ago or in a year's time.

But let us also see that whatever improvements are gained can only be defended in the years ahead if the struggle becomes more than an economic one.

Whichever party is in power, it will do its utmost to oppose the economic struggles of workers. In such a situation, success will only be possible by challenging the system politically as well.

The need is to prepare for these struggles by utilising the present growth of militancy to start to build a revolutionary socialist organisation throughout industry.



A Leeds clothing worker clearly expressing her view of union officials at a mass meeting in Leeds last week. On Tuesday shop stewards recommended a

return to work next week but the workers are still in fighting mood and may stay out.

Leeds rag trade strikers stop 50 factories

by Vince Hall

LEEDS:— Rag trade employers are still reeling under the effects of the spreading strike in the clothing industry. Militant women workers are marching around the Leeds area bringing factory after factory out to join them in support of their claim for a shilling an hour rise.

By last weekend, 20,000 workers had brought 50 factories to a halt. The strike had spread from the central factories to all the outlying ones and now many of the smaller firms in South Yorkshire have walked out in sympathy.

The militants on the unofficial strike committee went by invitation to the North East to put their case. Some factories struck before they arrived.

All the major sections of the Ready-made clothing council are now out and still the strike shows every sign of spreading to other parts of the industry. Many workers have vowed that when they get the shilling an hour on the basic and the shilling on the minimum, that won't be the end of it.

Busy day

Last Monday was a busy day for the militants. The strike committee met in the Trades Hall in the morning to discuss the state of the strike.

A number of very small shops (less than 50 employees) were still at work but all the major chain tailors were out. These include Montague Burton, John Collier (there will be nothing in the window to watch soon), Hepworth and Peters.

Just before mid day, about 1000 strikers met on Woodhouse Moor to hear the latest details of stoppages. A list of the shops still in was announced and the workpeople split into three groups to cover them.

I went along with 300 marching people down to the Woodhouse area

of Leeds. They were singing 'We shall overcome', which has been a theme tune ever since the John Collier workers started the ball rolling four weeks ago.

The demonstrators, mostly women, surrounded the small factory of H Spender Ltd and swarmed round it shouting 'Out, out, out'. They banged on the windows and pushed open the doors.

Shut down

Middle-aged ladies rushed in screaming 'Support us', 'Don't be blacklegs', 'Stop scabbing.' Several of the operatives walked out straight away and said that the others would come out when the strikers had moved on.

A group was left to make sure they did and the place was shut down inside 10 minutes.

The demonstrators strode on, chanting in jubilation, blocking traffic and taking over whole streets while nervous policemen looked on. The second place to be overcome by the incensed ladies was Hall Schiller Ltd.

The workers would not come out at first, since the manager had

threatened some of them with the sack. But the continuous uproar and singing and shouting outside proved too much.

Several ashen faced men walked out nervously into the crowd. Later the rest of the women ran out.

One elderly lady commented, 'You can understand how they feel. My heart was in my mouth when the Colliers workers came to our shop but we came out and followed the protest. Now if they're scabbing they'll have to put up with it. We've got to be solid.'

This tactic has been used very successfully to keep the strike at full stretch when the managers in the small family concerns have used all kinds of threats and offers to keep their workers in. But as another lady said, 'Our gaffer offered us over the odds but we came out just the same. We older ladies have put up with it too long.'

'We were one of the best paid before the war. Now we ought to give the young 'uns a decent chance. We'll have to keep up solidarity.'

And the biggest ever stoppage since the General Strike in clothing is still solid and determined.

REPRESSION GROWS AGAINST AMERICAN LEFT

THE NIXON administration is attempting to ruthlessly smash the growing left-wing movement in the United States. Last week five of the seven defendants in the Chicago 'conspiracy' trial were sentenced to five years jail each, plus fines of more than £2000 apiece.

They were also jailed for contempt of court, which meant expressing their own opinions. Even their defence attorneys were jailed for contempt in a ludicrous travesty of justice presided over by an elderly near-fascist clown called Judge Hoffman.

It was Hoffman who, at the start of the trial, had ordered Black Panther leader Bobby Seale to be strapped to a chair and gagged. Seale's case has yet to be heard.

The five were found guilty of seeking to promote a riot during the

Mayor Daley's mini police state of Chicago.

In New York, the trial is still proceeding of the Black Panther leaders. Both trials spotlight the growing rightwards drift of American society as big business and the middle class yell for action against the left.

Socialist Worker expresses its unqualified solidarity with all those under attack in the 'land of the free'.

IS INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSIONS

Roger Rosewell (ASTMS)

on the motor industry

Sunday 1 March 7.30pm

6 Cottons Gardens E2

March in Solidarity

with imprisoned Irish civil rights prisoners.

Protest against the imprisonment of jailed republicans.

SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY

Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, 3pm. March to 10 Downing Street

Called by Clan na h'Eireann, supported by Irish Civil Rights Solidarity Campaign and the International Socialists

Bosses attempt to ban pay deal pamphlet

by John Deason(TGWU)

A SOCIALIST WORKER pamphlet on a proposed new pay scheme for the CAV-Lucas factory in Acton, North London, has been met with an attempted ban on its distribution by the management.

But more than 400 copies of the pamphlet were sold inside the factory in spite of the management's efforts to discipline workers found giving it out.

The factory is part of the combine that supplies components to key sections of the car industry.

The central features of the proposed new pay scheme are higher basic rates with smaller piece rate bonuses.

Significantly, the new piece rate system would end up paying less at higher piece rate performances (better job rates) than is possible under

the present set-up. This would undermine the stewards' ability to secure local wage increases through 'mutuality' over piece rates.

The background to the CAV proposals has been a series of management attempts to impose their own piece rates on disputed job prices under threat of clocking out the workers concerned.

This first happened on 31 December, when the management capitulated after 1500 pieceworkers staged a sit-in strike in solidarity with a dispute over a job rate on the night shift.

But two similar actions since have shown some senior stewards to be reluctant to involve the whole factory organisation in defence of the important principle of mutuality.

Mutuality covers job times, rate fixing, norm calculating, manning and grading - in other words, job

evaluation, which has existed in CAV for 12 years or more.

Mutuality is the cornerstone of shop steward organisation, an encroachment on the management's 'right' to manage. It must be defended against any attacks.

To counter the new pay scheme, the pamphlet calls for a guaranteed basic rate of £21 now, increasing every six months by way of a cost of living clause to be mutually negotiated by shop stewards.

DEMAND

The pamphlet also raised the demand for the same bonus for each worker on the same section in an attempt to attack individual piece rate earnings which divide the workers.

In spite of some promised increases in women's pay by December 1971, women workers would still remain in separate grades on

much lower rates. The pamphlet demands that women should be in the same grades as men, with equal pay now.

The scheme is intended for the whole Lucas group and it has already been accepted at CAV Rochester. It is essential that the Lucas combine shop stewards' committee should be strengthened and mobilised to fight the package of bits and tricks throughout the group.

As with any other package deal, it will only be defeated by raising demands that take the initiative from the employer by insisting that the rank and file be fully informed.

They must be allowed the right to vote on each part of the deal before considering it in its entirety. Only by the rank and file's clear understanding of the issues involved will such 'deals' be defeated.

Ford workers' debt of gratitude to Swansea

AS A FOUNDRY shop steward at Ford, Dagenham, may I take this opportunity of congratulating the men of the Ford Swansea plant. I also know that Ford workers owe them a debt of gratitude for keeping the parity issue alive.

How serious has the Ford Motor Co been about this question of parity? If one examines the variety of hourly rates of men of a common grade, say 'C' for example, with definitely over four years' service, you will see how laughable Bob Ramsey's statement of parity in Ford really is.

A survey of hourly rates conducted in one department proved quite definitely there is no parity in Ford no matter what grade. During our survey we found a grade 'C' man with 17 years' service earning 11s 1d per hour while right next to him was another grade 'C' man with eight years' service earning 11s 4d an hour.

In another area of the same department there was a gold watch, 30 year service man getting a penny an hour less than his mate with 10 years' service, both of them grade 'C'. And the classic case is of a 10 year 'B' getting a penny an hour more than a 21 year 'C' man.

So much for parity in Ford. The Ford Motor Co have got the mobility of labour clause by national agreement and they have the right to put you on a heavier job if it is required. But the men on the floor have not got the right to negotiate a higher rate for the job. That must be done at national level.

Production workers are getting sick of having their rights undermined by certain right-wing leaders of certain craft unions, so much so that if the trend continues we may see production 'committees' coming into being.

We are tired of one man trying to exercise an influence out of proportion to the size of his paid up membership. In the foundry, we lost our foundry allowance in the new wage structure. We also get a very large number of fettleers grade 'B'. Any inroads made on that picture are

LETTERS

due solely to the efforts of the convenors without help from national level.

The Ford Motor Co has offered £4 on the 40 hour week; it has been said it is the biggest ever offered by Ford. RUBBISH. American Ford workers have got more.

What the company has done in fact is to calculate what is the lowest possible sum the Ford workers would accept and not fight. The answer: £4.

The Ford workers must look at this £4, see it for what it is, see it in the light of the all-party drive for the 'Common Market' with the massive upsurge in the cost of living, and of course decimatisation, rising rents, rates and mortgages.

See if you have made a breakthrough, or been taken for the old confidence trick. - DENIS O'FLYNN Romford, Essex.

Panthers: allies or demagogues

CHRIS HARMAN'S evasive letter not only does not answer the criticisms which were made of IS's Black Panther meeting but confuses the issue by inventing, in order to demolish, non-existent arguments against his own position.

No one in IS would oppose the formation of black groups to 'fight back against the racialism bred by capitalism'. The questions at issue are:

Are groups such as those who disrupted the IS meeting genuine representatives of the black workers and allies in the struggle against racism? Or are they demagogues parasitic on the masochism of the trendy left?

Can the activities and slogans of American groups such as the Black Panthers be imported without alter-

ation to Britain?

The Indian Workers Marxist-Leninist Association has given an excellent analysis of the opportunist Black Power groups:

'The bourgeois and petit-bourgeois elements within the black population have sought to exploit this black racialism for their own evil ends. These elements aspire to join the big league of capitalist exploiters: they want to have their 'place in the sun' and a share of the spoils.

'However, their opportunistic ambitions to climb the economic ladder are constantly frustrated by machinations of the white big bourgeoisie. Now, with reactive racialism on the part of some black working people, these hustlers see their chance to strike a bargain with the system; and to impress the system with their potentially disruptive capacities and thus to induce it to provide them with greater opportunities.

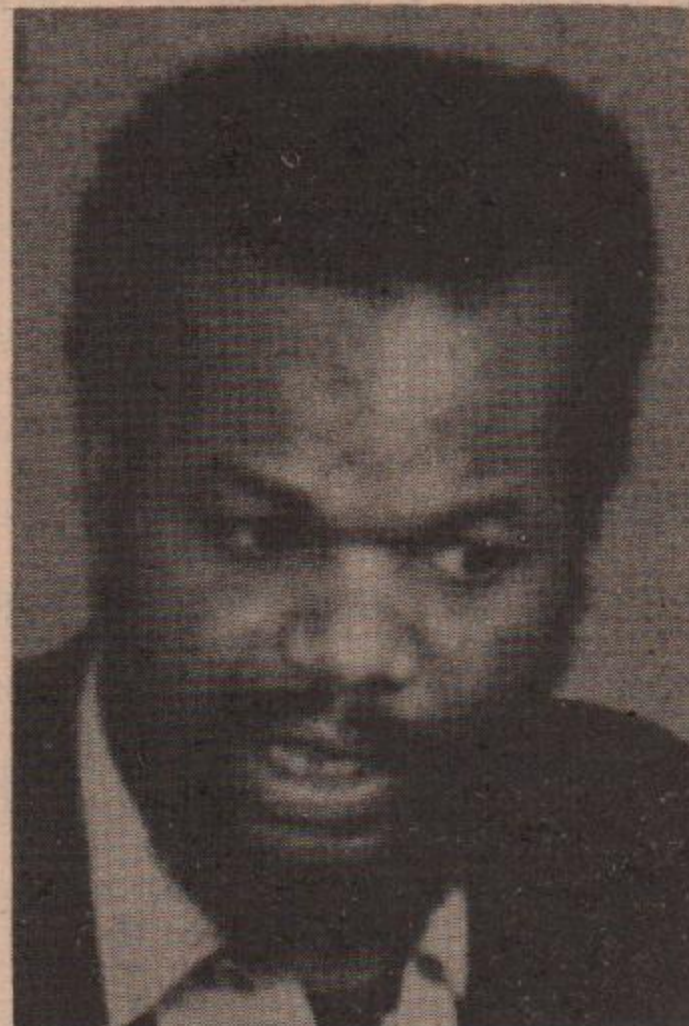
'Therefore, the main purpose of these 'con-men' of the black community is to use the struggle of the black working people for racial equality, in order to enable themselves to make a deal with the establishment at the expense of the long-term interests of the black working people. Thus, these elements surely want a revision in the political framework, but not a revolution in the economic foundation, of the present system.'

Fortunately, no significant section of black workers have supported the demand for Black Power. Many immigrant organisations have explicitly come out against it.

The Communist International once raised the demand for an independent Black Republic in the northern states of the USA. The blacks didn't take it up.

Harman rummages in history's waste paper basket for a variant of this discredited policy. Tragedy becomes farce. It worries Harman as little as it did the Comintern that the blacks didn't support the demand which he tries to foist on them.

Harman does reserve the right to



Keith Spencer: Black Panther speaker at the IS meeting

criticise the Black Power groups. But he doesn't actually criticise. His attitude to the right to criticise is rather like that of a Conservative MP on the right to demonstrate - it's too sacred to actually be used.

Harman should have used his right of criticism to condemn the anti-semitic reference made by one of the speakers at the IS meeting and to point out the inappropriate nature of Black Power slogans in British conditions.

In the USA, the Black Power slogan is ambivalent. It can be interpreted as a demand that the population of the black ghettos should themselves exercise control over their own neighbourhoods instead of being brutally tyrannised by the municipal and state authorities.

A demand for municipal decentralisation. Stronger versions see the ghettos as internal colonies which must gain their independence, probably as a result of a protracted civil war.

One version is reformist, the other utopian. But neither is racist. Black Power in the ghetto would clearly be popular democratic power.

Another interpretation says that blacks, whatever their class pos-

ition, should unite against whites (and especially Jews) whatever their class position on politics. This version is clearly racist.

Of course, in reality, these positions are not clearly distinct. (Some otherwise dogmatic black racists are prepared to make an exception of the late J Stalin.)

One must be prepared to discuss patiently with black workers who combine elements of anti-racism with vestiges of reactive racism. But one must not mistake this type of confusion with the deliberate ambiguity cultivated by the British Black Power groups.

In Britain the position differs from that in the USA in important respects. The blacks are a much lower proportion of the population. For example, in the London boroughs with the heaviest concentrations of immigrants, whites remain a majority.

What can the slogan of Black Power convey to a white worker in such an area? It must appear as a confirmation of Powell's ravings. I never expected the racists. 'Home rule for Brixton' to be taken up by the left. Yet someone at the IS meeting wanted blacks to present similar demands for autonomy as the Welsh!

One of the more ludicrous tendencies of the trendy left is to parrot irrelevant slogans taken from different political contexts. In jumping on the Black Power bandwagon, Harman displays a monstrously patronising attitude to the black militants who are genuinely struggling for equality.

It is conceivable that the struggle to achieve integration will be lost. But for IS to withdraw from this struggle before the issue is decided would be a betrayal of our basic duty of solidarity with black workers. - JOHN SULLIVAN, London W9.

John Sullivan is wrong on two factual points: the IS meeting was not 'disrupted' by Black Panther supporters - their presence was welcomed. And no speaker made an 'anti-semitic' remark. One speaker, referring to the US, said that many Jews 'think of themselves as white' and are hostile to the black struggle. - EDITOR.

Socialist Worker

6 Cottons Gardens London E2

Tel: 01-739 1878 (editorial) 1870 (business)

CAPITALISM has nothing to offer mankind but exploitation, crises and war. The ruling classes of the world - a tiny minority - subordinate the needs of the vast majority to the blind accumulation of capital in the interests of competitive survival.

Imperialism condemns two-thirds of mankind to famine and calls forth movements of national liberation which shake the system and expose its essential barbarism. The constant and mounting preparations for war and the development of weapons of mass destruction place the survival of humanity itself in the balance.

The increasing intensity of international competition between ever-larger units drives the ruling classes to new attacks on workers' living standards and conditions of work, to anti-trade union and anti-strike laws. All of these show capitalism in deepening crises from which it can only hope to escape at the cost of the working class and by the destruction of all its independent organisations.

The only alternative is workers' power - the democratic collective control of the working class over industry and society through a state of workers' councils and workers' control of

WHERE WE STAND

production.

Only thus can the transition be ensured to a communist society in which the unprecedented productive forces thrown up by capitalism can be used to assure an economy of abundance. Only the working class, itself the product of capitalism, has the ability to transform society in this way, and has shown its ability to do so in a series of revolutionary struggles unprecedented in the history of all previous exploited classes.

The working class gains the experience necessary to revolutionise society by constant

struggle against the ruling class through the mass organisations thrown up in the course of that struggle.

To overcome the unevenness with which this experience is gained, to draw and preserve the lessons of past struggles and transmit them for the future, to fight against the pressure of bourgeois ideas in the working class, and to bond the fragmentary struggles against capitalism into a conscious and coherent offensive, a revolutionary Marxist party of socialist militants is required, embracing the vanguard of the working class.

The struggle to build such a party is only part of the wider struggle to create a World Revolutionary Socialist International, independent of all oppressors and exploiters of the working class, whether bureaucratic or bourgeois. International Socialists therefore fight for:

- Opposition to all ruling-class policies and organisations.
- Workers' control over production and a workers' state.
- Opposition to imperialism and support for all movements of national liberation.
- Uncompromising opposition to all forms of racialism and to all migration controls.

US DIFFERENT TO BRITAIN

CHRIS HARMAN'S statement on the question of black organisation (19 February) is, on a purely abstract level, quite correct. Unfortunately, it lacks any concrete analysis of the particular situation in Britain at present.

Harman's insensitivity to the real complexities of the problem is typified by his suggestion (alarmingly common on the left) that 'skin-heads' can be equated with racists. This is quite as dangerous an error as an over-sectarian attitude to black organisations.

Harman's whole argument is based, not on a fact, but on a prediction - 'it will be these immigrants who will be the first to begin to fight back against racism.' Maybe. But it hasn't happened yet. There has been no mass immigrant response to Powell and his allies.

In the US, since 1965 at least, it has been clear that large sections of the black population were taking the lead - there, obviously, it would have been madness to ask them to wait for white workers. Instead, sections of the US white left found meaningful forms of joint action.

But the whole situation of black people in Britain is different from that in the US. In the US, the black population has come out of slavery, and regards the US as its homeland. Even the demand for secession of black territory can be meaningful. Segregated institutions (eg schools) have existed for many generations, and are only just beginning to be broken down.

In Britain, immigrants have sought individual solutions to their problems by coming to Britain. (The problems, of course, derive from British imperialism.) Black people

in Britain have formal equality and are faced with subtle attempts to introduce segregation (eg dispersal of schoolchildren).

This is not to suggest that black people in Britain are not the victims of racialism. It is to argue that different forms of racialism will receive different responses.

We must clearly distinguish real revolt by the mass of black people from the artificial solutions of small groups who may be out of touch with the mass. In the US the Black Panthers have rightly denounced those who make a cult of African food and clothing, try to revive Swahili, etc. Attempts to transplant American experience may be similarly artificial in Britain.

Harman admits the need for political discussion but underestimates its importance. In the US, the stimulated thinking of the Panthers on broad political, historical and international questions has allowed them to fall under the influence of the Communist Party, which may well be fatal to them.

If joint work with black organisations is to be possible, two points must be clarified from the outset:

1. Our unconditional support - moral, financial and physical - for black people under attack from the hooligans of the state machine and the extreme right.
2. The fact that our analysis is in class terms and that our strategy is a class strategy.

On this basis, we can have useful activity with black organisations - and with the very many black trade unionists outside these organisations. - IAN H BIRCHALL, London N9.

DEATH IN HIGH PLACES

Almost every day a construction worker dies in Britain

Colin Barker talks to a militant shop steward

AT NINE O'CLOCK one morning last October a triple failure in the electrical supplies to a new steam boiler at Shell's Petrochemical plant at Carrington, near Manchester, created an emergency situation for 20 minutes.

The emergency 'ended' with an explosion in the furnace cavity.

The sudden expansion of gas blew the flue trunking — a steel section bigger than a bus — several yards from the main structure.

The hot gases rushed out and completely enveloped a young apprentice lagger who was working nearby. He and another young worker were hurled 25 feet to the ground below.

The young lagger, 16-year old Malcolm Edwards, with just six weeks of his working life behind him, died the next day in hospital.

The next morning, 800 construction workers employed at the site stopped work in shocked anger at Malcolm's death. The whole site marched to the main administration block and stood in silence for two minutes before dispersing home.

'Will never happen again'

The stewards have some questions about the accident. Why, they ask, was such an emergency situation allowed to develop for 20 minutes without contracting and other non-essential personnel being moved from the danger spot? For 20 minutes a state of emergency had existed, yet a boy died.

At the inquest, Shell were praised for their safety consciousness. Later the chief safety officer assured stewards that this kind of thing would not happen again.

No one can doubt that employers do not like accidents. Yet, on average, almost every working day a construction worker dies in Britain and dozens more are injured.

The Shell plant at Carrington, is as sites go, well organised. Shell itself employs about eight safety officers there and the various construction companies on the site make their foremen responsible for safety as well.

Shell's safety record is probably better than average. Yet Malcolm Edwards died and many workers have been injured. Why?

Anarchy and waste of big business

A militant shop steward in the construction industry explained some of the reasons to me. They illustrate all too terribly the anarchy and waste of big business.

'Most construction firms employ safety officers — often men who've been with the company for donkey's years in some other capacity. They care of course. But they're employees of firms whose main concern is building plants for profit. I've known them walk past work areas that were just diabolically unsafe.'

Scaffolding is a major cause of accidents in construction: half the deaths each year are caused by falls from scaffolding. The pressure to maintain production, to keep costs down, produces a fearful toll.

'Often there are no kickboards, no handrails, ledges are too wide apart.'

To be really safe, scaffolding should be rebuilt several times. An electrician who follows a brickie onto a job will find the scaffold's too low for his work. So he finds a two-foot box to stand on.

'The hand-rail (if there is one) is now only 18 inches above his feet. He can trip easily — and perhaps, if it's an organised site, there'll be a strike when he dies...'

But how many firms will re-erect scaffolding several times during a job? Tendering for contracts is a competitive business and firms are anxious to cut costs.

The training of scaffolders should be a major concern in the industry especially now buildings are reaching greater heights. More height means more strain on the bottom sections.

Special skills are needed, yet few scaffolders have any training at all.

'Often on the smaller sites a brickie or joiner will erect his own. Some pretty rickety sights can be seen. This alone shoves up the injury rate.'

'It's a terrible thing to say, after the ETU experience but we do need registration of scaffolders, perhaps a grading scheme. The trouble is, as things are now, this would put more control in the employers' hands.'

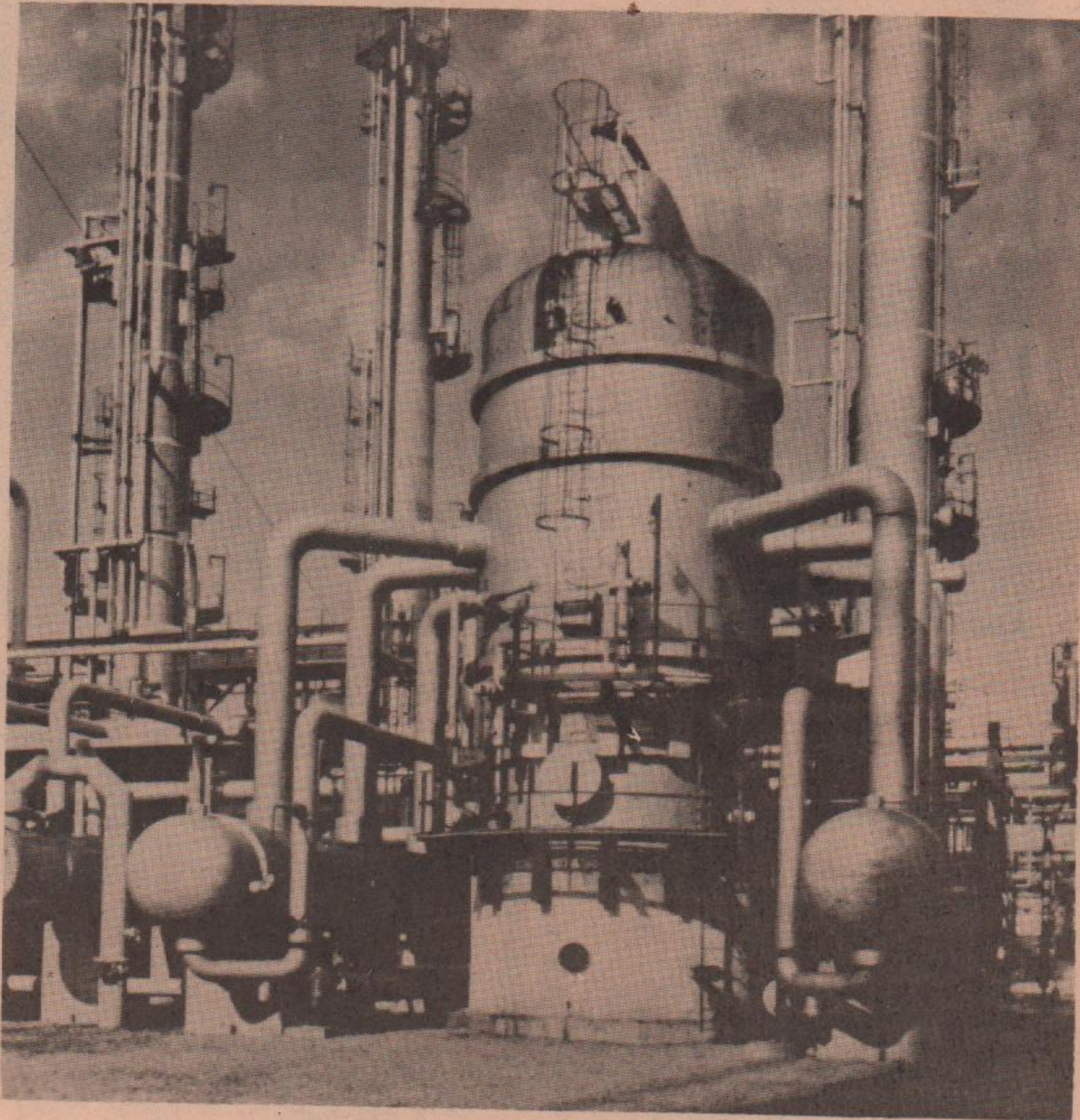
The Factory Inspectors are made almost useless by the nature of the industry. If a steward calls in an inspector, he'll look at the unsafe condition and make recommendations to the employer.

These aren't enforced. The condition will continue. It might be unfenced lift shafts, poor scaffolds, power cables buried under mounds of rubble or running through pools of water.

Perhaps, when nothing is done, the steward will call the inspector a second time. Again, he'll make recommendations.

By the time the steward gets him to take action, the job may be completed and he will have to start all over again.

'What's needed is more powers



A giant petro-chemical plant. Deaths during the building of these plants are an indictment of a system that puts profits before workers' lives.

for the factory inspectors, to make them more effective. Perhaps he should be able to stop a job immediately, without having to go through the cumbersome British legal system. Of course, this might lead to corruption. But the inspectors seem a pretty genuine and sincere bunch — it's a pity they have to be such toothless tigers in this particular industry.'

Action is needed right away

The same kind of problem arises with 'going through procedure'. Many safety issues on construction jobs are, by the nature of things, short-term.

Slow procedures are useless. You need action right away — or there can be a dead worker.

General training in safety is appalling. 'On Shell, since the explosion, a training programme's been started for everyone on site. It's starting at the top with management and working down through sup-

ervision to the lads on the job. But to train everyone on this job alone will take two and half years! And there's a high labour turnover...'

Normally, in an emergency on a big process plant, everyone's supposed to follow a certain procedure. But what's the procedure? Many workers — especially construction workers who've not been there long and won't have been instructed — just won't know until it's too late.

Often alarm systems are quite inadequate. 'There's one fire alarm at the centre of the site. A worker in an area near a compressed air tool, a heavy motor-driven plant, a steam jet or the like just can't hear most types of alarms used at present. You'll find alarms seized up, or that they're not driven by special emergency supplies of steam, air or whatever.'

'One of the biggest causes of accidents, I'm afraid, is shame. The chargehands rely on it a lot. You might be working on top of a 100 foot steel vessel, and one morning there'll be ice on the rungs.'

'The chargehand will tell you to go up. A militant or safety conscious lad wouldn't go, and the

chargehand wouldn't dare try to make him. But he'll try a young lad, and call him a cissy if he looks doubtful. Or you'll get old men going up who've been used to unsafe working so long they've stopped bothering — or they're afraid of losing their jobs.'

'Carrington's a fairly strong site. No one could be sacked for refusing to work unsafely.'

'But it still happens. Every day young and old risk their lives out of shame and stupidity, because they're made to feel silly and small... For the shop steward, it makes the job almost impossible. In my eyes it makes them as bad as scabs and strike-breakers.'

Safety officers turn their backs

'The chargehands are encouraged by the foremen (who are responsible for safety!) the management and safety officers, who close their eyes and turn their backs on this kind of practice.'

'They're always saying how safety conscious they are, but it's a load of hypocrisy. The safety officers are trained, but remember if they get too keen at their jobs they won't get too far...'

'One reason Carrington is safer than some other jobs is that we're not on individual piecework. We work a collective bonus, so I can sit all week refusing to touch an unsafe job and it'll cost me and everyone else a penny or two from the pay packet.'

'But on piecework, you could lose £6 — and on the "lump" you'd lose the whole week's money. It's horrifying, but you get scaffolding put up on piecework — so much a foot!'

Safety depends on job organisation

'The truth is, under capitalism you'll never get safety in construction. You can never do a construction job under the terms of the Factory Acts. A really safety conscious firm would just go out of business.'

'Short of workers' control, safety depends on the level of organisation on the job. You can see it in the accident statistics — there are less deaths and injuries in the well-organised parts of the country.'

'We need more training, but most of all we need to develop the confidence of the lads so they'll feel strong enough to refuse to work in unsafe conditions at any time.'

The slaughter on the shop floor: what militants should demand

by Roger Cox (AEF)

WHILE WE CAN look forward to the Tories bidding with Labour politicians over law and order in the streets, nothing will be done about the slaughter in British factories, which is increasing every year.

An article in the Sunday Times Business News (8 February 1970) exposed the full cost and extent of industrial accidents and laid the blame squarely at the door of the employers: 'Out of 597 fatal accidents in factories and sites in 1968, the inspectorate found 262 breaches of the code by employers against six by workers.'

Official records do not give a true record of industrial accidents since accidents that result in less than three days' absence from work do not have to be reported. And it is estimated that 25 per cent of those accidents that should be reported are not.

Even so, in 1968 the factory inspectorate reported 254,454 accidents. A truer picture is given by the 937,000 new claims for industrial injuries benefit last year. (This figure also ignores accidents causing less than three days' absence.)

All in all, about 75,000 workers will be absent as a result of injuries sustained at work on any given day. While the government tries to blame all our economic ills on the 4.6 million days lost through strikes last year, they ignore the 21.9 million days lost as a result of industrial injuries.

While accurate figures of injuries are hard to find, figures of fatal injuries probably give a true picture. Information from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' Occupational Safety Bulletin should, after Labour Research, be required reading for all militants.

It shows, among other things, that it is considerably safer to be a policeman than to be a building worker, miner or railwayman.

The majority of industrial accidents are preventable. American

authorities state that 98 per cent could be avoided, but even accepting a more conservative 80 per cent, 480 workers died last year who should still be alive and nearly 800,000 were injured unnecessarily.

Workers lives are made cheap by the greed and stupidity of our system and by the absence of any pressure from the government on employers to prevent accidents to workers. 'Some firms in the construction industry admit that they prefer to "write off" a number of workers each year rather than install expensive safety equipment' (Sunday Times).

COST

The Sunday Times listed costs of accidents to the economy and to the state, estimating the cost in lost productivity of industrial injuries at £55m each year, and of fatal accidents at £11m. The cost of the industrial injury scheme is £111m and the cost of accidents to the National Health Service is £43m.

There are many unknown additional costs. When a man has been injured, he has often to return to work at a lower paid job.

One of the biggest groups of families below the poverty line are those in which the father is disabled and his family has to claim supplementary benefits, free school meals and so on.

Compare these costs with the handouts given by the state to firms in research grants and loan contracts — £802m in 1967, £886m in 1968 — then consider whose side this so-called socialist government is on.

Productivity deals increase the risk to workers. The drive to increase productivity at all costs is made time and again at the expense of safety.

The law does little to help. This report, quoted from the RoSPA

Bulletin is typical:

'Following the death of a 24 year old labourer who was buried by a fall of earth in an untimbered trench, his employers were prosecuted for a breach of rule 8 (i) of the Construction (General Provision) regulations.'

They pleaded guilty to failing to provide an adequate supply of timber or other suitable support.

For the firm it was claimed that they did all in their power to provide proper equipment and even consulted safety engineers to direct them on how jobs could be carried out in safety. On this occasion there was a breakdown in the links of responsibility and supervision. A fine of £100 was imposed.

The law is not only ineffective. Even the existing provisions are inadequately enforced. It should be made more expensive for employers to break the law.

Last year, 937 firms were prosecuted. The average fine imposed was LESS THAN £50. The maximum fine that can be imposed under the Factory Acts is £300.

The individual worker can sue his employer for negligence, but when he does so he joins battle against the giant insurance companies. Only the biggest unions have resources to match the insurance firms.

Even so, the fight is likely to drag on for many years. Industry pays out about £50m each year in premiums to the big insurance companies who in their turn pay out about £40m in compensation. The insurance companies are not concerned with reforming bad employers.

There is little prospect of improvement, and no sign of any legal reforms. The needs of world competition will make employers use every bit of available capital for increasing production and the pressure on the workforce to increase

productivity will ensure that this is at the expense of safety.

The question of safety is a question of control and the first battle is to convince the workers of this fact. The direct cost of accidents falls on the working class.

We pay for most of the health service. We pay for the experts employed by the trade unions. Above all, it is always we who are butchered and killed.

The employer has only to fill in a claim form for his insurance company and a report to the factory inspectors. The worker has to live with his injury. Even if the employer is taken to court, the fine he receives confirms the fact that workers' lives are cheap.

CAMPAIGN

What is needed is a consistent campaign on the shop floor for these demands:

1. A safety committee should be set up consisting of representatives from each department or section in the factory, plant or site. These representatives could be stewards or other workers elected because they have a particular interest in safety.
2. The committee would also have on it representatives of the management and the supervision of the safety maintenance department (see 2). The minutes of the safety committee should be published for all workers. So should details of all accidents.
3. A special safety and maintenance department should be set up, concerned solely with the safety of machines, and in no way responsible for production. Its supervisors should be answerable to the safety committee.
4. No loss of earnings due to modifications of machines or of processes that are necessary to increase safety.

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The Allenby Bridge: Israeli soldiers and a Jordanian policeman haggle over the fate of Palestine refugees made homeless by the drive for land of the Zionist state of Israel. Zionism, says **STEPHEN MARKS**, did not seek to solve the oppression of the Jews by fighting their oppressors. It collaborated with the oppressors to drive the Palestinians from their land and created a racially exclusive country.



Zionism — enemy of Arab and Jew

Jews in the West have been victims of racialism for generations, culminating in the unspeakable atrocities of Nazism in the Second World War.

Zionism claims to be a Jewish national movement which aims to solve the problem of centuries of persecution by establishing a Jewish state.

As this seems to many an solution of the problem, it is not surprising that many on the left hesitate to criticise Zionism, even when they regret the close links of Israel with American imperialism. And Zionism cashes in on this attitude, labelling all opposition to it as 'anti-semitism'.

But Zionism did not seek to solve the problem of the oppression of the Jews by fighting back against the oppressors. It collaborated with them in exchange for protection in the task of colonising a country, Palestine, whose native inhabitants were deprived of their country without their consent.

Incapable

Zionism shares with anti-semitism the assumption that the Jews are incapable of living as a minority with non-Jews because racialism towards minorities is part of 'human nature'. The founder of Zionist ideology, Y L Pinsker, wrote in 1892:

'Now that we have grasped that Jew-baiting is a kind of hereditary demonopathy (belief in demons), unique to the human race, and that it is...inherent in the human spirit, we must draw a conclusion which is important for us namely — we must give up the attempt to overcome these trends of hatred just as one must give up the attempt to overcome any other psychological hereditary trend.'

And Theodore Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement wrote in

his diaries:

'In Paris I achieved a freer attitude to anti-semitism, which I now began to understand historically and to pardon. Above all I recognised the emptiness and futility of trying to "combat" anti-semitism.'

Zionism was therefore as little opposed to anti-semitism as a black organisation which financed the return of immigrants to the West Indies would be 'opposed' to Enoch Powell.

Invaders

But there was one difference: Palestine was already inhabited — by the Palestinian Arabs. The consequences of this situation were well put by Moshe Dayan:

'Why do the Arabs hate the Jews? Answer: because they take us to be foreigners, invaders who took an Arab country and turned it into a Jewish state. And they are right about it.'

'From their point of view we did it. We didn't come here to contribute, or for a contribution to the Arab countries. We came here to establish our state because we feel that this is our homeland.'

Zionism has always had two objectives: to keep on good terms with whatever imperialist power was dominating the region, first in the hope of being given Palestine, and subsequently for assistance against Arab resistance.

This involved opposing Arab independence in Palestine for as long as the Jews were a minority. In 1936, when the Arabs staged a general strike against British rule, the Zionists broke the strike in the Haifa docks by bringing in scab labour from Zionist dockets in Greece.

When the Arabs tried to blow up British pipelines in the same year, the British mobilised squads of Zionists to oppose them. Among them was the young Moshe Dayan.



courtesy Le Point

The aim of the Zionist settlers, unlike that of white settlers in South Africa for example, was not to exploit the local population but to replace it.

Herzl had written: 'When we occupy the land... we shall expropriate gently the private property in the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit out the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries and by denying it any employment in our country... Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the pool must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly' (Diaries, vol 1 p.88).

The Zionist 'trade union', the Histadrut, was open to Jews only. It struck against all employers who hired Arab labour in order to build up a Jewish working class.

On all land bought by the Zionists, the Arab farmers were evicted and replaced by Jews. And the Zionists inaugurated a 'Buy Jewish' campaign, boycotting all Arab products.

As a result the development of the Arab economy was stunted and no strong middle class or working class developed. The Arab resistance to Zionism fell into the hands of corrupt feudal landlords, who denounced Zionism in public, sold the Zionists their land at vast profits in private, and, when the 1948 war came, left their people to their fate.

Massacre

Abandoned by their 'leaders' and terrified by massacres such as that at Deir Yassin where a whole village was wiped out by Zionist terrorists (the man responsible, Menahem Begin, is now a government minister) the Palestinian Arabs fled from many areas, and in many others were driven out by the Zionists at gunpoint.

Before 1948 Arabs were two-thirds of Palestine's population. After 1948, in the new state of Israel, they were 12 per cent.

The only reason the Israelis hesitate to annex the territories in the rest of Palestine seized in the six-day war is because they fear that in the new boundaries Jews would not be in a secure majority.

As Dayan put it: '... I think it is not in accord with our aims for the future. It would turn Israel into

either a bi-national or a poly-Jewish-Arab state and we want to have a Jewish state.'

The same fundamental racialism underlies Israel's citizenship laws. These grant nationality to any Jewish immigrant from wherever he may come, but deny the right of immigration altogether to all non-Jews and to Palestinians who were actually born there and are now refugees.

The second objective of Zionism has always been to oppose any other solution to the Jewish question which might threaten their claim that a Jewish state in Palestine was the only way out.

The most notorious anti-semiter of the early part of the century was the Russian Tsar's Minister of the Interior, von Plehve, who supervised and organised massacres of Jews. Herzl met him in 1903 and pointed out how many of the Russian revolutionaries were Jews.

If the Zionists got their way, Herzl argued, these troublemakers could be shipped off to Palestine! Von Plehve soon got the point, and wrote to Herzl offering in the name of the Jew-baiting Russian government, moral and material assistance with respect of the measures taken by the Zionist movement which would lead to the diminution of the Jewish population in Russia.

When the racialists cry 'Jews out!' the Zionists offer their services as travel agents.

Opposed

The rise of Hitler gave the Zionists the chance to argue with some force that a Jewish state was the only way out. They opposed any attempts to admit Jewish refugees to countries other than Palestine.

David Ben Gurion, later Israel's first Prime Minister, wrote in 1938: 'Millions of Jews face annihilation. The refugee problem has assumed world-wide proportions. Britain is trying to separate the issue of the refugees from that of Palestine.'

'It is assisted by anti-Zionist Jews... If Jews will have to choose between the refugees — saving Jews from concentration camps — and assisting a national museum in Palestine, mercy will have the upper hand and the whole energy of the people will be channelled into saving Jews from various countries.'

'Zionism will be struck off the agenda not only in world opinion but also in Jewish public opinion. If we allow a separation between the Jewish problem and the Palestine problem, we are risking the existence of Zionism.'

In 1947 when a Bill was placed before the American House of Representatives to relax America's racist immigration laws to allow some of the survivors of Hitler's death camps to enter the US, the Zionists would not support it.

In autumn 1947, however, of 100,000 displaced Jews in the US zone of Germany, over 55,000 applied to enter the US. The Zionist reply to this was expressed in the Klausner report to the American Jewish Committee: 'I am convinced that these people must be forced to go to Palestine... Those who are not interested are no longer to be wards of the Jewish committee... The Jewish Community at large



Ben Gurion: mercy must not have upper hand

(must) reverse its policy and instead of creating comforts for the Displaced Persons, must make them as uncomfortable as possible.'

Here again, the Zionists' plans meshed with those in America who leaned to anti-semitism, or were unwilling to fight it. As Senator Eugene McCarthy put it: 'Everybody knows why we set up the country (Israel). We did not want to face up to the problem of Jewish immigration here.'

The real Zionist attitude to anti-semitism was summed up by the Israeli journalist Uri Harari in the paper Yediot Aharonot, 2 September 1969: 'It is not of course customary to talk of it, but many of us felt a tiny bit of joy when we read newspaper reports of the swastika epidemic in Europe in 1960 or about the pro-Nazi movement in Argentina... These phenomena form a part of our world outlook, because Zionism said, and is still saying, that this is the way things are.'

That is why on some occasions, as in Iraq in 1950, the Zionists have even gone so far as to stage attacks on Jewish synagogues and schools in order to encourage emigration to Israel.

Alliance

Zionism is a reactionary and racist blind alley which offers no solution to the problem of racialism. These can only be solved by a fight against racialism and the system which produces it and not by the Zionist method of an alliance between the oppressors and the oppressed to 'solve' the problem at the expense of some third party.

In Palestine, Zionism has created a Hebrew-speaking nationality which would be entitled to self-determination in a socialist Middle East. But in its racist Zionist form, the state of Israel is opposed to the interests of all the peoples of the Middle East, including its own population.

The racial discrimination against Arabs and against dark-skinned Jews by those from the West, as well as the mounting burden on the Israeli worker of 'defence' of the country against those from whom it was stolen, together with the growing militarisation of life which this produces underlies the old socialist principle that 'a nation which oppresses another nation cannot itself be free.'

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When racialists cry 'Jews out' the Zionists act as travel agents

Danger to Ulster left from Paisley fanatics

by Sean Treacy

THE NORTH OF IRELAND is once again poised on the brink of widespread violence. Although the British press and television have lost much of their interest in what happens in the Six Counties, the underlying political crisis has steadily worsened.

The next months are likely to be dangerous ones for socialists and civil rights militants, many of whose lives are in direct danger at the hands of Paisleyite fanatics.

The 'reforms' agreed between Westminster and Stormont last year have been challenged on all sides. For the Orange extremists they represent a sell-out by official Unionism.

For the bulk of the civil rights movement the 'reforms' were seen as an attempt to shore up the tottering Unionist regime.

Although middle-class Catholics, who provide the bulk of the so-called civil rights 'moderate' leadership, won some concessions, there was next to nothing for the working people, Catholic or Protestant.

The 'reforms' barely scratch the surface of the appalling housing crisis. And in spite of all the talk about 'greater economic opportunity', the unemployment situation worsens and threatens catastrophic proportions over the next 12 months.

It has become increasingly evident not only to Catholic but also to some Protestant workers, that the Unionists and their local Green Tory loyal opposition in Stormont, lack the power and the willingness to change the set-up.

Miserable though the so-called 'reforms' are, they have provided an excuse for the Unionists to strengthen the battery of repressive measures which they use to crack down on any opposition.

With the full blessing of Westminster, convictions have been brought against a number of militants like Bernadette Devlin and Niall Vallely, a leader of the People's Democracy, at present in Armagh jail.

Militants hounded

At the same time Republican militants have been hounded. To show approval of what is happening in the Six Counties, the British have staged a political show trial of republicans accused — on the evidence of an arms salesman — of trying to buy arms in Huddersfield.

But a Belfast court has dismissed charges of sabotage laid against a group of ultra-right Paisleyite fanatics, who have made no secret of their involvement in extreme para-military groups.

To complete the picture of 'impartial British justice', the Royal Ulster Constabulary have refused to take action against the cops responsible for the death of a civil rights supporter during the disturbance last year. And the British Army has been mobilised to contain civil rights' demonstrations and protect Paisleyite meetings.

Scottish sparks get grim glimpse of grading scheme

SCOTTISH contracting electricians had a foretaste of what to expect from the newly-formed Scottish Joint Industry Board, which brings together employers and union officials. Reports of the JIB's first meetings have just been published.

The meetings discussed the implementation of JIB rules in Scotland. They were presided over by J D Houston, ex-draughtsman and ex-Fairfield productivity chief, retained by both English and Scottish JIBs as an 'independent' chairman.

He has been paid £1000 in Scotland alone for 10 meetings — nice work if you can get it, especially compared with an approved spark's £20 13s for 40 hours.

Houston was quick to use his 'independent' chairmanship to rule that sparks wrongly graded by the employers should not be entitled to back-dated payment when up-graded by the appeals committee.

A further indication of how the board intends to sort out the industry spark present at the meetings proposed that all tradesmen should be paid 9s 4d an hour as the minimum skilled rate.

This was vetoed by the employers' secretary, Smillie and he was supported by the



Unemployment: the situation grows worse for Catholic and Protestant

blatantly appeasing extreme right wing forces. Inside the Unionist Party, the right, led by men like James Craig, is within an ace of control.

Paisleyites now control a number of key Unionist Associations and they openly boast of their ability to overthrow Prime Minister Chichester-Clarke whenever it suits them.

Appeasement only defers the inevitable crisis within the Unionist Party. And it also encourages the para-military extremists who have mounted a number of brazen terrorist raids across the border and against the homes of 'liberal' Unionists.

Repressive laws

Civil rights militants have made it clear that they will not be coerced. The PD has led a number of demonstrations against victimisation of its members and against the repressive laws of the Unionist regime. They have met with increasing support from young left-wing republicans.

These militants have been disoriented in part by the recent split in Sinn Féin and the IRA. The splinter group is unashamedly right wing. While the majority group contains many socialist militants, it is led by a pro-Stalinist grouping which wants to turn Sinn Féin into a 'radical' Free State parliamentary reformist party.

The political pattern has been further confused by the vote of the Northern Ireland Labour Party to fuse with the British Labour Party. Although the outcome of this move is as yet uncertain, it has created a problem for those revolutionary socialists who have placed primary importance on membership of the NILP.

What is certain is that the fusion move is inspired by the right-wing Labourites who, as always, tail-end behind the Unionists in competing for the allegiance of Protestant workers.

But the militant left, irrespective of its 'Fenian' image, is able to win a hearing among militant Protestant trade unionists, particularly on the question of unemployment. It is doubtful whether membership of the NILP provides any real access to these trade unionists.

Electricians' Union executive councillor Blairford. The decision leaves the door open for employers to delay grading and to pay below the basic rate.

But the board is not only concerned with keeping its members in line. It is also worried by the rates of 13s and 15s an hour being paid on some of the big construction sites.

With the support of the EETU's executive member, the bosses will attempt to have the JIB basic rates paid on these sites — which could mean a 3s an hour cut for some sparks.

This shows that all sparks, whether JIB graded or not, are in danger of being caught up in the board's net.

A start has been made to organise opposition to the board's far-reaching powers. But many sparks have not yet realised the long-term dangers of the JIB and more work will have to be done to build an organisation that will be able to fight and win any struggles with the board.

And hand in hand with this struggle must go a campaign to change the leadership of the union that has sold this iniquitous agreement to its members.

The worsening of the situation in Northern Ireland carries with it the danger of a campaign of selected violence against the left. The extreme right are encouraged in this as a result of the repudiation of groups like PD by the right-wing and moderates in the civil rights movement and Dublin government ministers.

The development of a 32 county revolutionary socialist movement is more necessary than ever. Many of the elements of a possible socialist regroupment already exist.

The PD has already declared its willingness to discuss unity with all genuine groups interested in a principled unity. The move to start a 32 county socialist journal will be important in clarifying the issues facing the Irish revolutionary left.

The solidarity movement in Britain will have to be vigilant. Although activity has declined in recent months, any new deterioration in the situation in the Six Counties will again raise the question of solidarity action in Britain.

There is the opportunity of uniting in one solidarity movement both the revolutionary left and many republicans who now recognise that the leadership of the civil rights movement in Britain cannot be left to Free State Embassy-London Irish Club elements who have shown their hostility to a militants civil rights programme.

Cottons Column

FOR THE MASTER CLASS, democracy has always been like a lap-dog: occasionally you let it out for a little exercise. But only when it suits your pleasure.

The last fortnight has seen more little outings of this kind than for quite a time. For the Ford empire has been taking a bit of a hammering.

You'll have heard, of course, about the heroic founder of this dynasty. Henry Ford was a staunch defender of the democratic faith himself. After all, he did write the following in his book *My Life and Work*: 'In Russia, under Sovietism, the workman goes to work whether he wants to or not. The freedom of the citizen has disappeared in the prison-like monotony in which all are treated alike. That is slavery.'

Anyone so bold as to stick 'In Halewood, under Ford...' in place of Henry's location would be nothing other than a scoundrel and an agitator.

But hold on! Our Henry went on to describe what kind of society he favoured: 'Freedom is the right to work a decent length of time and to get a decent living for doing so; to be able to arrange the little personal details of one's own life.'

So come on, boys, forget about your parity, mutuality. Get back to the grind and the export drive. Attend to those little personal details of your life. Like what shift you're on, and whoops... don't forget that last wheel nut.

Frenzy of the L&O brigade

LIKE DOGS ROLLING in their own vomit, the law and order brigade are working themselves into a frenzy in defence of private property. For this is what those policemen who have been mown down in recent weeks died to defend.

The disgusting spectacle of these curs attempting to package their own sickness in the silver paper of humanitarianism is beneath contempt. Nevertheless, some examples of the techniques they use in their glorification of state violence are highly instructive.

One Tory MP, for instance, suggested that the stocks should be brought back for vandals and football hooligans. What fun the petty middle class could have, throwing all sorts of foul objects at their helpless victims.

Others advocate the birch, the cat of nine tails. What shivers of twisted delight in torture do such demands contain? Still others cannot sleep at night dreaming of the golden age of order and discipline that will immediately issue forth on the return of hanging.

And how does that famed liberal newspaper the Daily Mail handle this fundamental dilemma? It has a special 'law and order' column, sometimes the front page lead. Strip away the filth and hysteria about 'the jungle that is London' (last Friday's issue) and you find the following statement tucked away in the text: 'But murder and manslaughter cases both showed decreases.'

Perhaps the finest little tit-bit which quite unintentionally mocks the incredible and violent hypocrisy of these keepers of a more perfect order, is this exchange during last Thursday's Law and Order debate in parliament:

Mr Hamilton.-Mr Taylor is in the pay of the Scottish police and this is inspiring some of his questions. (Opposition protests and cries of "Order".) The Speaker.-It has been ruled that an MP does not have to declare his interest during questions.

Mr Taylor.-I have made it public in every debate in which I have spoken on the police that I was advisory consultant to the Scottish police, a position previously honourably held by the Home Secretary. (Interruptions.) The Speaker.-Order. There is too much heat.

Mr Hamilton.-He is a squalid little man. (Labour cheers, loud Opposition protests and renewed cries of "Order".)

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Socialist Worker

TRAWLERMEN FIGHT FOR £20 MINIMUM

by Alan Rand

TRAWLERMEN, the 'second-class citizens' of Hull, have hit back at their bosses.

They have been on strike for more than a week in a crucial struggle to win basic rights from the trawler owners.

Hull is the biggest fishing port in the country and with Grimsby is an outlet for half the nation's fish. There are 2000 trawlermen.

The trawler industry is notorious for the low wages and the dangerous conditions in which the men are made to work. From January to February 1968, 58 men were lost from trawlers in three weeks.

The importance of this battle against the fishing industry owners has prompted the Transport Workers Union to back the strike. Since Dave Shenton took over as area secretary and Mike Neve as organiser, the trawlermen have had strong allies in the union.

The men are demanding:

1. A substantial increase in the basic rate for a deck hand from £14 5s to £20.
2. 100 per cent trade union membership of crews.

They are pressing also for a pilot scheme under which shop stewards would sail on all trawlers. And they want more time off between spells at sea, plus enforcement of Board of Trade safety regulations.

Still at sea

Like the Aberdeen trawler strike last summer, this strike will probably take at least two weeks to reach full momentum. This is because 40 trawlers are still at sea out of a fleet of 90.

The employers are playing on this delay in an effort to break the morale of the strike. They have told the men repeatedly the strike is off and have attempted to recruit blackleg crews at £25 over the basic pay.

The local paper, the Hull Daily Mail, has reported ships breaking the blockade. But what has really happened is that skeleton crews of blacklegs have taken trawlers out to the Humber and returned in small craft to try the same dodge again.

But the worst villains are the police. They do their best to hamper the pickets by moving them on and arresting them for trivialities. A picket arrested for 'obscene language' was fined £10.

Last week a city police car ran down a picket, mounting the pavement to do so. The police keep a vanload of dogs permanently at the docks gates, ready for action.

But all this does not deter the trawlermen. Instead it increases their militancy. They know they must force the employers to negotiate or lose all that their union membership stands for.

Full support

Last Friday, students at Hull University pledged their full support and solidarity for the trawlermen at a packed meeting organised by the International Socialists and addressed by Mike Neve and Pete Martin of the TGWU.

A number of students have been down on the picket lines and they plan a mass campaign to involve other Hull workers in the strike.

Fishermen all over Britain have found it difficult to organise against the employers because of the nature of the industry, with its many small, separate units. At £14 5s for a deck hand for an 85 hour plus week, they are one of the most exploited sections of male workers.

The 450 trawlermen at Grimsby who returned to work after a brief stoppage must be encouraged to come out again and to reject the £14 14s 'awarded' to them.

With their mass involvement and solid picketing of the dock gates, the trawlermen stand to win. Hull bobbars are refusing to unload 'black' fish and dockers are considering what action to take in support.

With the help of other workers, fishermen in Hull and in other ports can cripple the supply of fish and stand up to the tyranny of the bosses.

NEXT WEEK

Bernard Ross reviews an important new book on the Minority Movement.



Oliver Lebus: sold profitable finance company

1000 face sack as furniture bosses close factory

SW Reporter

ONE THOUSAND WORKERS will lose their jobs when furniture manufacturers Harris Lebus close their Tottenham, North London, factory.

The workers are to be thrown on the scrap heap in a declining area through the gross incompetence of the management. But it is the workers who pay while the bosses continue to draw their fat salaries.

A year ago Lebus announced that reorganisation of the Tottenham factory had been completed and no further changes were planned. Now the plant is to close — and the first workers knew of this was when they were summoned to a meeting last Friday.

Lebus made a loss of £1m last year, but their other activities including a Reading upholstery plant,

High Court move to crush strike

THE HIGH COURT moved on Tuesday to crush the strike of 12 maintenance engineers at the Johnson Matthey metal works in Enfield, North London. The men have been on strike since last June for union recognition.

Officials of the Engineering Union agreed in the High Court to stop blacking supplies to the factory and the pickets had to agree to stop interfering with the passage of vehicles and blacklegs into the factory.

NOTICES

TEACH-IN on apartheid, Ealing Technical College, St Mary's Rd, W5. Lecture Hall 1. Monday 2 March, 6.30 pm.

NEW Middle East Bulletin available monthly, 1s each. Orders and enquiries to Lil Power, 24 Carlisle Mansions, Carlisle Place, London SW1. Donations and voluntary labour needed.

COUPLE wanted urgently to share self-contained furnished flat. Half-hour City. Own bedroom, share large living room, breakfast room, kitchen, bath, wc and garden. 7½ gns a week. Tel: 01-808 7412

IS BOOKS: Crisis in the schools — teachers, the community, a study of teachers in the USA. 3s plus 1s pp. 6 Cottons Gdns E2.

MARCH to launch Co-op Party and trade unions' Vietnam week: Sunday 1 March 5.30pm Charing X embankment.

Notices must be accompanied by cash — 1s a line, 7 words per line — and must arrive first post on Monday.

Published by the International Socialists 6 Cottons Gdns London E2. Printed by SW (Litho) Printers Ltd (TU all departments). Registered with the Post Office. Annual subscription £2 10s.

are trading satisfactorily. Astonishingly, the firm sold its finance company, Merchandise Funds, which made a profit of £233,000 in 1968 and was the group's most significant profits earner.

Lebus workers should refuse to accept the dole queue through the negligence of the management. They should demand that the factory stay open and, if necessary, that the government take it over and subsidise the production of much-needed furniture free from the profit motive.

Militant under attack

RON BEAK, secretary of the Overseas Telegraphists branch of the Union of Post Office Workers, was due to be disciplined by the union executive on Thursday following complaints from his employers about an alleged disclosure of a Department of Employment and Productivity report. Branch members picketed the UPW head office in Clapham on Thursday in support of Mr Beak.

Italian picket

THE International Socialists will picket the Italian Embassy. Three Kings' Yard, W1 next Friday evening (6 March) from 6.30pm to demand the release from jail of Italian socialist editor Francesco Tolin. Hundreds of signatures demanding his release have been collected by IS and sent to Italy, where Tolin's appeal will be heard shortly.

SW Reporter

A RECONVENED MEETING of the National Union of Railwaymen's annual conference delegates last week decided by 51 votes to 24 that all candidates for the top union posts must be Labour Party members.

By their vote they have excluded about 99 per cent of the union membership from running for election.

This decision follows last year's High Court ruling that Labour Party membership, under union rules, was essential only after election to office, so that the union high command could attend Labour Party conference.

Ford workers must demand hard cash, not paper promises

by Les Pick

THE STRIKE by Swansea Ford workers ended at a mass meeting last Saturday when the management agreed to further talks on equal rates with Midlands car workers. During the previous week the strikers had been subjected to the usual accusations of wildcat behaviour by press and television.

The strike was depicted as the result of a sinister power struggle between the Engineering and Transport Workers unions to show which was the more militant. In fact, neither union exactly rushed to back the Swansea men — with the exception of AEF executive member Reg Birch, who fought hard for the strikers.

Barbara Castle attacked the strikers for not abiding by the decision of the majority of other Ford workers. She said they were holding the Ford empire to ransom by their action.

You can bet your life that if in the next struggle Swansea votes against the majority and returns to work, the workers would hear previous little about going against the 'democratic vote of the majority'.

It is the Ford bosses, with their specialisation of plants and division of labour in pursuit of even higher profits, who create the situation where a strike at one plant paralyses the combine.

The workers have nothing to do with this situation. They just create the profits.

Why did Swansea come out and not the other plants? It is a smaller factory and the stewards are in closer touch with the men, who are totally unionised.

The lessons are clear. In the face of the repeated treachery of the bosses and the betrayals of top union officials like AEF president Scanlon, who voted against supporting the strikers, only rank and file militancy can win anything from Ford, who have conceded as little ground as possible. As chief labour relations officer Bob Ramsey said:

'If the trade union side of the National Joint Negotiating Committee wish to table for discussion the question of parity at any other statutory meetings of the NJNC during the next 12 months, then the company would accept the item on the agenda without commitment.'

'They would listen to what the trade union side have to say and in due course give a considered reply.'

Underneath this verbiage, the fact remains that at Rootes a senior operative still gets £10 a week more for the same work and Ford still makes £1200 a year out of each worker.

It is up to the rank and file to turn paper promises into hard-cash reality.

Stewards still strong

by Andy Enever (TGWU)

Metal Stamping and Body Plant

HALEWOOD: Ford workers in the Paint, Trim and Assembly plant are back at work this week with the shop stewards' committee as strong as ever.

At the beginning of last week, the organisation built up over the last seven years seemed to be in ruins when the workers rejected their stewards parity strike call.

But for two days after that disastrous mass meeting, certain sections in the PTA, particularly on the trim lines, were consistently agitating and showing their discontent with the decision.

By Tuesday, stewards sensed that feeling in the PTA was running high. Various sections were walking out over a multitude of issues.

So convenor Eddie Roberts pulled out the whole plant to a meeting. The PTA plant has about 4000 of Hale-



Reg Birch: fought hard

wood's 12,000 men.

He was unwilling to make any sort of recommendation after his strike call two days earlier had been rejected, but from all sections of the mass meeting arose cries of 'Support Swansea'. So the PTA voted overwhelmingly to support Swansea — a reflection of the men's confidence in their extremely able shop stewards.

Stewards in the Metal Stamping Plant and in the Transmission plant were unjustifiably angry at this. They found themselves isolated purely and simply because they had failed to convince their sections of the need for strike action and because they had been saying at countless shop stewards and combine meetings that their sections were behind them.

So the MS & B stewards and the Transmission stewards had fallen down on their job. Their failure to recognise this in the future will certainly lead to an even more serious weakening of the Halewood and indeed the whole Ford shop steward committee.

It is to their credit that the PTA stewards have recognised that last week's isolated militancy of the PTA must not be allowed to continue. They must go back to meetings with the stewards from the other two plants.

The PTA plant cannot take on the whole of the Ford empire on its own. No sort of workers' unity can be achieved, even within Halewood, unless the PTA men can convince the other plants that their decision was correct.

The groups of militants in the other two plants which have formed over the last week may well push new and better stewards to the fore.

If the stewards had not responded to the rank and file's call for solidarity action, they could well have faced a drop in morale in the PTA and possibly an attempt by the management to do a repeat performance of Dagenham 1962 and chop all the militant stewards.

Welders stop work

FORTY welders in the Ford body plant at Dagenham stopped work for an hour on Tuesday over the issue of flexibility. They refused to accept that five of their members should be transferred to lower-grade sub-assembly work.

The management were forced to give in and put the men back on welding. The immediate reaction by the welders, who refused to wait for long negotiations 'through procedure', achieved the desired result.

Rail union leaders move to gag left opponents

SW Reporter

The new formula is an attempt to put a stop to opposition to the leadership. In particular, the rule revision is an attempt to stymie members of the Communist Party and their sympathisers from running for high office in the union.

But this kind of stage management is part and parcel of rather broader designs on the part of the NUR right wing. They want to change the whole basis of voting in the union so that only those who attend branch meetings can vote.

Full-time officers are to be given a better contract of employment and the general secretary will continue to hold office for life, not re-elected every five years.

Such a rejigging of the rules must

be implacably opposed as alien and hostile to the interests of workers' democracy. But it is not enough just to shout about 'democracy'.

The only way to oust the class collaborators who have sold the membership into more and still more kinds of bondage is to oppose them by rousing the rank and file.

While this does not exclude continued intervention in union elections, the real fight can only be based on a rounded programme which leads onto such questions.

The struggle for democratic control over the NUR will be only one part of a revitalised struggle against the employers' offensive towards so-called 'modernisation'