

Socialist Worker

FOR WORKERS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

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American anti-war movement turns to workers



WHAT A CHOICE



By the Editor

THEY'RE AFTER YOUR VOTES AGAIN! Labour and Tories, both determined to attack the living standards of ordinary people in order to boost the profits of big business, are bidding for votes as the election auction gets under way.

In the next few weeks we will be battered by promises and pledges, all guaranteed to be abandoned as soon as the election is over. In particular, the Labour Party will huff and puff about being the friend of the 'underdog', determined to modernise society.

We won't put any money on it, but it wouldn't surprise us if Harold Wilson even said he was a socialist.

To all intents and purposes, we have just had six years of successful Conservative government. In fact, Labour has been more successful than the Tories in placing the burden for modernising and streamlining the big business system squarely on the shoulders of the working class.

That is what the election is really about: which party is to continue the drive against the working people in the interests of the tiny but powerful class which owns the factories and the productive resources.

Labour may make 'left-wing' noises in the next few weeks, but don't be fooled. They have allowed some wages to rise before the election but if they return to office the freeze will be savagely reintroduced.

RECORD

Just look at their record in the last six years:

Unemployment at 600,000 — the highest since the end of the war.

Soaring cost of living as prices, profits and dividends rise unchecked, with wages legally 'restrained', this has led to the first real cut in workers' living standards since the war.

Rocketing rents and fares.

Attacks on the health service through the re-introduction of prescription charges. No help for the millions living below the poverty line, especially the old people and young children.

Total abandonment of the housing programme.

Immigration: restrictions have been intensified in the rush to cash in on the racist hysteria developed by Powell.

And, above all, the sustained and vicious drive against the trade unions, the threat to legally shackle them, the attempt to make them the scapegoat for the inefficiency, chaos and waste of big business. An attack backed by the

ALL OUT ON 6 JUNE!

THE RACIALIST cricket tour is going ahead.

Socialist Worker calls on all its readers to join the massive protest demonstration in London against the tour on Saturday, 6 June.

International Socialists will march not just against the tour but against the South African police state and the huge financial stake which British big business has in southern Africa.

The protest will start at 9.45 am at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park and will march to Lord's Cricket Ground by 10.30am.

Help turn it into a militant political demonstration against racialism in South Africa and Britain and in solidarity with those forces in Africa fighting to break the grip of imperialism.

Build socialist alternative

campaign to thrust productivity bargaining on the major sectors of industry in order to break the power of organised workers.

Abroad, the most grovelling and despicable support for US big business's war against the peasant people of SE Asia. Ballot rigging in Guyana to keep out a leftish party, war against the people of Aden, appeasement of the white racist thugs in Rhodesia.

Will Labour dare ask you to vote on their record?

Yes, it has been a reactionary, thoroughly anti-working class government. But, if the thought had entered your head, the Tories offer no alternative.

The Tories, if anything, would be worse. They are the traditional enemies of working people, the party financed and guided by the most backward and outspoken opponents of the labour movement.

Wilson and Heath — Labour and Tories. What a choice!

But a choice there must be. Of course, as socialists we must stress that the real decisions are not taken in parliament and the real fight for workers' wages and conditions is on the shop floor, not in the election booths.

But on 18 June millions of working people will be voting and the socialist movement should make its voice heard.

SET BACK

We say that the Tories must be kept out. Although there is little difference between the parties, a victory for the Tories would be seen as a major set-back by the most politically active sections of the working class.

And any demoralisation felt by active workers would enable the Labour fakers like Barbara Castle to re-establish control over the labour movement.

The growing and deepening industrial and political struggle against the attacks on the trade union movement could be held back and channelled into safe 'Out with the Tories' campaigns.

The fight to build a socialist movement based on industrial workers, fighting for the total transformation of our society, cannot be successfully carried through until illusions in the Labour Party are smashed.

The price we have to pay for voting Labour in order to keep the Tories out is our failure to build a credible socialist alternative.

Faced by the grisly charade of the next few weeks, let us redouble our efforts in the coming months and years to build such an alternative that will challenge the system in the factories, not just in the ballot box.

But this time we say: Keep the Tories out! Vote Labour — and go



Pickets at Pilkingtons on Monday jeering blacklegs who returned to work

Police violence fails to break Pilks strike

SW Reporter

ST HELENS: - Police violence of a kind not seen for many years in the North has failed to break the glass workers' strike.

A mass meeting of 5000 strikers on Wednesday morning voted with only 15 against to stay out on strike until their demands are met.

The meeting said there would be no return until:

1. 28 men sacked from the Pilkington plant in Pontypool are reinstated.
2. £3 offered by the management was put on the basic wage, not on the average top rate.
3. A pledge of no victimisation of strikers.

The establishment of this company town — management, union officials, police and magistrates — have united in a desperate attempt to break the seven-week old strike.

Rigged voting

Last Saturday's ballot on a return to work produced a tiny majority in favour of going back. But strike leaders claimed that the voting was rigged.

The only complete list of union members entitled to vote is held by the management, not by the union, the GMWU. Many union members who have been employed at Pilkingtons for years found they were not on the voters' list, while part-timers were allowed to participate.

It is alleged that some people voted as many as a dozen times.

The strike committee called a mass meeting on Sunday where there was an overwhelming vote to stay on strike.

There were wildly exaggerated management claims of the numbers who went back on Monday. In fact, less than 1000 out of 9000 crossed the picket lines.

The strikers were united and

picket lines on Monday and Tuesday in spite of attempts by the police to break their ranks.

When blacklegs left the plants, the police, including mounted police, smashed into the strikers, many of whom had their wives and children with them.

On Tuesday a young worker was sent to a detention centre for three months after Monday's clashes. One man was jailed for a month.

As our analysis of the strike on page 4 shows, the strike was remarkably peaceful until this week. And now it is the police, not the witch-hunted strike leaders, who are responsible for the violence.

Moves by TUC secretary Vic Feather to end the strike have not satisfied the strike committee. They are determined to stick out until their demands are met.

They deserve all possible support from every section of the labour movement.

They are fighting a magnificent battle that, unlike the phoney election, is of fundamental importance to all workers faced by low wages and bad conditions.

They face severe financial hardship. Rush donations to:

John Potter, 63 Parbold Avenue, Blackbrook, St Helens, Lancs.

FOUR DAY MARCH Release South African political prisoners

Oxford, High Wycombe, Uxbridge, London, 22-25 May: stop the racist cricket tour, no more British investments in Vorster's police state. Public meeting, Shepherd's Bush, 7.15pm 24 May. Rally Trafalgar Sq. 2pm 25 May. Spkrs include Mike Cooley, vice-president DATA, Terry Barrett, TGWU. Organised by Ruskin College Kitson Committee.

A BOOK YOU SHOULD READ

A sign of hope from Russia's prison camps

The First Circle by Alexander Solzhenitsyn (Fontana 10s)

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN has denounced the publication of this book in the West and because of it and other works he has been under attack by the guardians of the Russian literary establishment.

He is expected to follow other writers, like Daniel and Sinyavsky, into political prisons.

A political prison is the main locale of the book. Solzhenitsyn has intimate knowledge of such prisons.

In early 1945 he was arrested and charged with making derogatory remarks about Stalin. For the next eight years he was in labour camps, at first in 'general' camps along with common criminals in the Arctic and later in 'special' camps for long-term prisoners.

The prison of The First Circle is at Mavrino near Moscow and is a 'special' one where highly qualified scientists and engineers are set to work on bizarre projects such as developing a technique for identifying voices over the telephone.

Great feeling

Solzhenitsyn details with great feeling the lives and histories of the inmates of the prison. Life at Mavrino is pleasant compared with the hardships of the Siberian labour camps but the frustrations of the prisoners at the petty rules are described with such insight and humour that you could almost compare the book with Catch 22. But The First Circle is much more tragic.

The relationships between the prisoners themselves and between them and the prison and petty governmental officials are examined in detail. From this you get the full flavour of the bureaucratic struggles which went on over the most trivial issues and filled the lives of the administrators of the Russian state.

But Solzhenitsyn is never angry, only amused. He devotes



Solzhenitsyn: amused, not angry

three chapters to what Stalin was doing during the period of the book (the last week of December, 1948) and what was going on was extremely funny.

The Great Leader is at one moment bristling with pride over a new biography of himself — 'strategist of genius... wise foresight... mighty will... iron determination... Lenin's virtual deputy from 1918 onwards — well wasn't he?... — and the next moment fuming over Tito's latest 'crime'.

'The fact that Kerensky was still alive somewhere never worried Stalin. He would not have cared if Nicholas II had come back from the grave — he had nothing against them personally; they had been avowed enemies; they had never had the impertinence to offer their own brand of a new and better socialism. Better socialism!... In other words different from Stalin's! The little guttersnipe! How could you have socialism without Stalin?'

Meat truck

There is little hope in The First Circle. Solzhenitsyn's protest against oppression by the 'Soviet' state is only at its formative stage.

The book ends with some Mavrino prisoners being transported, in a meat truck, to a

labour camp in Siberia. One prisoner says:

'I shouldn't worry about leaving Mavrino if I were you. It's a lousy place. No free Sundays for two years, bust your guts out working a 12 hour day for 20 grams of fat and they won't even allow you to write home. The bastards. And they expect you to work. It's hell, I tell you.'

Another prisoner, perhaps Solzhenitsyn himself, replies: 'No, Illya, it's not hell. That's not hell. Where we're going — that's hell. Mavrino is the best, the highest, the first circle of hell, it's almost Paradise...'

'He said no more, feeling it unnecessary. They all knew well enough that what awaited them was incomparably worse than Mavrino...'

'The prospects that awaited them were the taiga and the tundra, the Cold Pole at Oi-Myakoi and the copper mines of Jerzkazgan, kicking and shoving, starvation rations, soggy bread, hospital, death. No fate on earth could possibly be worse.'

At peace

'Yet they were at peace with themselves. They were as fearless as men who have lost everything they ever had — a fearlessness hard to attain but enduring once it is reached.'

Solzhenitsyn's experiences in Stalin's prisons have been poured out both in this book and in One Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich. He represents the first round in the attack on the repression of the Russian state, a situation of which the authorities are obviously aware.

The First Circle itself may not contain very much hope but the fact that it was written at all is a sign of hope.

KEN GREEN

ANTI-WAR

Paul Foot in New York reports on the massive opposition to Nixon's Indo-China holocaust

THE \$70,000,000 a day spent on the war in Vietnam is unlikely, so the financial experts of Wall Street tell us each day, to be substantially increased by the American invasion of Cambodia.

But even so the business community are worried. At heart they favour Commie-bashing wherever it takes place.

In their pockets, however, there is less certainty. One of the most bitter critics of the invasion has been Mr John T Connor, chairman of the Allied Chemical Corporation, described in the New York Times as having 'a record of reaching an opinion ahead of most other Business Council members'.

Mr Connor's message to a big Business Council gathering in Hot Springs, Virginia was simple: business was grappling with a recession and a fall in the stock market.

In such circumstances the expenditure in Vietnam, though less than one per cent of the national product, is an important consideration.

Still more important is the deep division in society created by the war which could well grow into what Mr Connor described as 'intolerable proportions'. In other words, Mr Connor is worried about the movement against the Vietnam war which has grown enormously in stature and in strength over the past few weeks.

It could grow into a threat to the very basis of American life, in particular the life of the Allied Chemical Corporation...

The first signs of opposition from the Republican business community highlights the dilemma which perplexes the wretched Richard Nixon.

On the one hand, there is his declared policy as soon as possible to clear American troops out of Vietnam with the minimum of loss of face and the maximum of 'Vietnamisation of the anti-Communist struggle'.

Business delighted

It was to this policy that Nixon paid his respects in his now forgotten speech at San Clemente on 20 April. Without consulting the generals, or even his own defence secretary, Nixon told a large television audience that he would withdraw 150,000 American troops from Vietnam in the next 12 months.

The business community was delighted and most Americans breathed a sigh of relief. In a congratulatory first article, the influential magazine Newsweek concluded:

'Some options were indeed fore-closed: there would be no US bombing of Cambodia and US troops would not be sent in.'

Yet Nixon and his Republican paymasters had not reckoned with the Frankenstein created by the war policies of successive American governments.

They reckoned without the Pentagon, without General Abrams and Ambassador Bunker in Saigon, without the extreme hard-line reactionary, Attorney General John Mitchell who has replaced even Kissinger in the President's inner circle.

General Wheeler and Westmoreland show their support behind these elements in a desperate attempt to effect the President's San Clemente decision. Night after night they worked on him with a variation of an old tune: the invasion of Cambodia.

Even Lyndon Johnson was unconvinced of the case for such an invasion when the generals pressed it on him in 1968. Having been told a thousand times that the next attack, the next escalation of the war would certainly be the last, Johnson finally grew cynical and sent the generals packing.

Nixon however, was more prone to the 'quick kill' philosophy with which Abrams, Bunker and co nationalised the Cambodian adventure. Their argument was further reinforced by the 'emergence' of a new government in Cambodia (curiously coinciding with Nixon's decision to withdraw more troops).

The new regime was being

'attacked by Communist troops', and as far as it was possible to estimate, was hated and abused by the vast majority of the Cambodian people.

Nixon, in a state of considerable personal collapse, gave in. The Frankenstein created by dangerous experiments had conquered its own master.

The only people Nixon had now to worry about were the Russians. Asked by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee whether the Paris talks on the war would be affected, Nixon scoffed.

'We expect the Soviets to protest this, just as we protested the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.'

At home, however, the protest was more serious. Until two weeks ago, Nixon had listened carefully to the views on student protest of Vice-President Spiro Agnew.

It was possible, urged Agnew, to forge policies in total disregard of the universities. Students and their kind were divorced from society and suspected by it.

The 'silent majority' were contemptuous of students, and therefore any policy which alienated students was electorally advantageous.

Agnew urged, and Nixon agreed that the politics of dissent, until that time represented by the universities, could be ignored and openly flouted.

So Nixon, on the day after his speech announcing the invasion, gave a television interview during



Nixon: forgot Frankenstein

a visit (appropriately) to the Pentagon and referred to 'these bums who are blowing up the campuses'.

The mood was well set on Monday morning for hundreds of thousands of National Guardsmen, armed with loaded rifles and bayonets, to pour onto the campuses in an attempt to stifle the student anti-war movement.

At one of America's most peaceful universities, at Kent State, Ohio, a battalion of the Ohio guard fired round after round of tear gas at a crowd of about 500 demonstrating students.

They chased the students up a hill. According to an on-the-spot report from the New York Times:

'As the guardsmen, moving up the hill in single file, reached the crest, they suddenly turned, forming a skirmish line and opening fire.'

The action was wholly deliberate. Eye witnesses later told newspapers that the two NOOs on either flank of the line had lowered black bayonets in an arc, in a pre-arranged signal to fire.

None of the other explanations have borne a moment's examination. The pathetic attempt of the Guard to explain the fire as 'retaliation to sniper fire from the students' was dealt with by the New York Times as follows:

'This reporter, who was with the group of students, did not see any indication of sniper fire, nor was the sound of any gunfire audible before the guard volley.'

Initial attempts to suggest that the National Guardsmen were in danger of their lives were doubted when it was reported that two Guardsmen had been taken to hospital, one

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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 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

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.

MOVEMENT TURNS TO WORKERS



Construction workers clashing with students in New York: the builders action has been condemned by other trade unionists

with an arm wound where he had been hit with a rock, the other with 'heat exhaustion'.

The firing went on for a full minute, at the end of which four students were dead, and four others were taken to hospital, critically ill. One of these is paralysed from the waist down for the rest of his life, and two others are still on the danger list.

The President's official statement following the killings tastefully made as much political capital as possible, stressing that their real cause was 'violent dissent'.

Nixon and Agnew, with the help of Mitchell and the generals, hoped to press their policy to the end — not only in Indo-China but also on the campuses. Had the campuses shown any signs of weakness in the face of this intimidation, the Nixon strategy could have been victorious.

As it happened, the shootings at Kent State provoked a nation-wide protest movement of a ferocity which Nixon, Agnew and Mitchell can never have imagined.

At universities and schools across the breadth of America, varying forms of protest, solidarity and mourning for the Kent State dead were organised. At least 10 of the major American universities were closed down by their authorities for the remainder of the term, their facilities handed over to students and faculty for 'anti-war activities'.

At others, students had to fight against their administrations to force a strike and the use of facilities.

Nixon blown off course

The protest has been so widespread and so solid that the Nixon Administration has been blown off its original course. Nixon has met and mollycoddled deputations of liberal professors and a delegation from Kent State university students.

In a press conference he went out of his way with the usual tinny rhetoric to 'build bridges' towards dissent and students. Nixon himself gave permission for the monster rally outside the White House.

Yet the student protest has encompassed a different element which, despite the heavy coverage given to campus news and statements, has not been reported in the American liberal press.

It is an element which is at once distinct from most big student protest movements in this country up to now, and can be summed up in the two words: **WORK STOPPAGE**.

Almost automatically, without recognisable political pressure and certainly without political tradition, the protest movement has moved sharply and distinctly in the direction of the working class.

A year ago, perhaps even six months ago, such a move would have been inconceivable. The student movement at large was still dominated by anti-working class sentiments.

The belief still obtained that the evils of American society could be sorted out through action in the

Democratic Party, or, worse still, through the continued expression of horror or sentiment by academics.

In the colleges today, especially in New York (the only area I have been able to assess) the move is all the other way: to the workers.

At New York University, at Columbia University, at the New School and at the City College of New York the strike has thrown up 'work stoppage committees' that are working day and night to contact trades unions and workers in the city.

The aim, expressed quite seriously in many quarters, is of 'bringing the United States to a halt in protest against the war'.

Passing myself off as a student from the London School of Economics (loud cheers) I attended a meeting of the New York University Community Contact Committee attended by some 40 representatives from schools and colleges all over New York.

All the speakers stressed the importance of making contacts among city workers and activating a strike against the war.

Later I attended a meeting of the Work Stoppage Committee at the New School in Fifth Avenue where city workers from different areas discussed further action and further methods of communication.

These committees have achieved untold successes in making contacts especially with members of the City, County and Municipal Employees, the Post Office workers, printers, telephonists, librarians and other white collar workers, many of whom have recently been, or are currently engaged in wages and conditions struggles with their employees.

Never was there a time in recent years when the workers of these big cities are more frustrated and depressed. Three recent reports hidden, in these weeks of chaos and crisis, by other news, have demonstrated the workers' plight.

The Federal Bureau of Labour Statistics announced that the average real wage of New York workers was lower than at any time since 1964. Money wages had risen, said the report, in one of the biggest rounds of wage increases ever, but inflation had eaten into the increases and left the real wage levels lower. Average weekly spendable earnings after taxes read as follows:

1965	\$78.50
1966	\$77.88
1967	\$78.50
1968	\$78.92
1969	\$77.54

[New York Times 7 May]

The other side of this coin was neatly demonstrated by a report that the Nixon policies to 'deal with' this inflation had led to dramatic increases in unemployment from 4.4 per cent in March to 4.8 per cent in April, the highest since April 1965. More than a million extra people were out of work in April compared with the previous month.

On Thursday, 7 May, Mr Simeon Golear, chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, launched a blistering and unprecedented attack on the Nixon Administration's policy towards public housing. He alleged that Nixon's policy for Federal subsidies would increase the rents of about 250,000 public-house tenants by more than 25 per cent and would drive many of them back into the slums.

The policies, he said, were part of a 'so-called Southern strategy which has allied public policy with ancient bigotry and racism'.

These and many other deprivations have begun to swing the pendulum of working class opinion away from its original support for or abstentionism from the Vietnam war and student protest.

The reaction to the students' approaches has been much more friendly than could have been hoped six months ago. The students' leaflets have been read hungrily, and district after district of local government and white collar unions have promised support in the event of any national movement for 'work stoppage' against Nixon's war policies.

Rude shocks

The students as a body, even the radical students, are ill used to contacting workers, let alone working with them. Their methods in many respects have been hopelessly crude and, worse, hopelessly ill-disciplined.

Many leaders of the work stoppage committees have imagined that contacting workers means contacting local union bureaucrats, and have met with some rude shocks as a result. Much worse is the prevailing mood of an obsession with activity which dominates so much of the work stoppage committees.

The meeting of the New School work stoppage committee refused to elect a chairman or a steering committee on the grounds that 'if we have a problem, we can deal with it'. Most of the discussion rambled around different forms of activity without any attempt to discover why activity was needed, or to assess political priorities.

Huge reservoirs of energy and enthusiasm are wasted in frantic and often purposeless endeavour for which, too often, no one can be held responsible because no one is elected.

In these situations a great burden has fallen on the small groups of socialist students, among whom the comrades of the American International Socialists are prominent in many of the New York universities.

These comrades are mobilising their small resources to the full, taking part in the debates, discussions and demonstrations and seeking always to make the maximum advantage from the students' 'turn to the class'.

The ideological barrier against



Kent University: the bloody murder which set fire to the giant protest movement

which so many of these comrades have been fighting — the suspicion and resentments against the working class so common among student radicals until quite recently — has now been burst. The IS comrades are working hard against the 'crazies' and their allies who imagine that trade unionists will tolerate their juvenile outbursts as easily as student radicals have done.

The students' turn to the class has not been reported anywhere on press or television, but it has been noticed with some fear by employers and government.

A gang of 200 construction workers, helmeted and organised, marched on demonstrating students in Wall Street and on the strike-laden university at Pace. Some 190 students were savagely beaten and hospitalised during the encounters which followed.

Already stories are leaking out about the organisation behind the assaults. The workers are mostly members of the International Brotherhood of Electricians, a union which has not had to struggle for years because its bosses (all of whom have supported Nixon on the war) are entwined in corrupt deals with the city administration. From this a small number of electricians get huge wage increases year by year in return for promises to act as scabs or abstentionists in city-wide strikes.

The scabs in industry have proved to be the scabs in politics, yet there is no doubt that the attacks in Wall Street will weaken

the work stoppage movement and revive anti-worker prejudices in the student mind.

Once again, it has been left to the IS to circulate the big colleges with leaflets pointing out that the 200 construction workers do not represent the aspirations or the views of the city workers. They add that other construction workers have publicly dissociated themselves from the assaults and that the unions less involved in struggle have proved to be the first to counter-demonstrate.

The turning point

'This,' says Kim Moody, student at the New School and a member of the American IS, 'is the turning point for the American student movement'.

On any estimate, the students have survived and beaten off the attacks of Nixon and Agnew.

Now, as the vacation starts, they are applying themselves hesitantly, but with increasing conviction, to building a movement powerful enough, not only to stop the war but to engulf the whole reactionary consensus from the White House to the boardroom of General Motors and Allied Chemicals.

The strike has blown wide open the corrupt and degenerate nature of the GMWU, which has acted in the best traditions of yellow, company unions

What really

happened at St Helens...



Pilkington strikers queuing last week to get their £12 'hardship' money from the union. It was the only cash they received from GMWU funds - and it led to cuts in their dole money

BY ROGER PROTZ

THERE is nothing saintly about St Helens. From the train, the tall chimneys of Pilkington's factories rise starkly above the town.

Glass is everywhere, spewing in huge mounds across factory yards and forecourts. Flashing in the sun, the glass brings a light relief to the drab, brown streets and the flat houses, many derelict, with gaping windows and doors.

Glass is St Helens. And St Helens is owned by Pilkingtons.

The town and surrounding countryside bear the stamp of the vast monopoly. Streets are named after the firm and a pub even carries the name of the great benefactor.

But little drinking is being done at present in any of the pubs of St Helens. After six weeks on 'unofficial' strike, 9000 glass workers face severe financial hardship.

The ferocious press witch-hunt against the strike has focused the country's attention on this small Lancashire town. The Pilkington dispute symbolises the growing revolt of lower-paid workers who recognise now that the militancy of the well-organised car and engineering workers is the only way to keep abreast of the rising flood of prices, profits and dividends.

But the St Helens men are fighting more than just a powerful and wealthy monopoly. They are also battling against their union, the General and Municipal Workers, which has acted throughout the dispute in the best traditions of yellow, company unions, determined at all costs to break the strike and get the men back on Lord Pilkington's terms.

Whatever the final outcome of the strike, it has blown wide open the

corrupt and degenerate nature of this so-called union which throughout industry is welcomed by the bosses as the best instrument available to keep down wages and militancy.

But, first, the firm, Pilkingtons came to St Helens in 1826. It quickly dominated the town and the glass industry.

By 1903 it was the only manufacturer of flat glass in Britain and high tariffs successfully stopped any competition from abroad.

Today Pilkingtons controls 90 per cent of the flat glass industry and 80 per cent of safety glass. It is the fourth biggest glass firm in the world and is reckoned to be worth £150m.

In 1968 the Monopoly Commission investigated Pilkingtons. The country was scarcely startled by the revelation that the firm was a monopoly or by the recommendation that, in spite of its unrivalled ability to charge what it liked for its products, its dominant position was not against 'the public interest'.

The bold Labour government took no action. After all, Lord Pilkington is a socialist and even advertises in Tribune.

No benefit

In the depression of the 1930s Pilkington's bought up most of the town for knock-down prices, turning it finally and decisively into a company town. But that ownership has done little to benefit the workers of St Helens.

Their town officially graces the list of the 30 most 'socially deprived' towns in Britain - jargon for slum housing, low wages, lack of amenities and the general good things in life which one might expect from a firm worth £150m.

Pilkington's main factories Ravenhead, sheet works, Cowley



LORD PILKINGTON: even the carnival makes a profit

Hill and Fibreglass, plus the Triplex works at Ecclestone Hill which the firm half owns and is rapidly buying more shares in - employ half the town's labour force.

In return for the vast profits which Pilkingtons sucks from its 9000 plus workers, it offers them a sports ground and an annual carnival. But the profit motive dominates even the workers' recreation - money is deducted from their wages to pay for both the sports ground and the carnival. The latter even makes a small profit each year.

The workers, who build the floats for the carnival in their spare time, have to pay to admire their own handwork and to enjoy the amusements and refreshments. And to observe the necessary social distinctions on such occasions, staff workers receive a sit-down tea, the shop floor get meat pies, standing up.

The strikers are not in the mood for a carnival this year. The arrogance of the management in the last six weeks has shattered the paternalism that gripped the workers for 140 years.

The strikers will go back to Pilkingtons to work - there is nowhere else for them to go - but attitudes have changed and hardened in the last six weeks.

Threats

In a full-page advertisement in the local evening paper, Pilkingtons urged the men back to work with threats of redundancy and hardship. It denies that wages are low and claims - truthfully - that it pays the 'best' wages in the industry. After all, Pilkingtons is the industry.

But the strikers paint a less glowing picture. They work a three-shift system and for a 40-hour week, including a weekend, they earn as little as £15 19s 11d.

One striker told me that for a five day stretch that was made up of three evenings and two nights he took home £18. Another claimed that he recently worked 100 hours for £43 including bonus.

Without the wildly fluctuating bonus rates, wages would be as low as £14 for a 40 hour week. Little wonder, then, that the average hours worked before the strike were 60 to 80.

Wages are scandalously low because Pilkingtons determines the rates for the town. The firm successfully stopped Ford building a car plant there 15 years ago for fear that the wages paid to car workers might spark off massive demands from their own shop floor.

But 15 years later, the explosion has occurred. Angered by mistakes in their wage packets, the workers decided on mass action to win a £ 25 a week basic wage for 40 hours.

The men's union, the General and Municipal, had done nothing for years to fight the low wages and unhealthy, sulphurous working conditions. Now it moved quickly to smash the strike.

The shop stewards' committee at first led the strike but an appeal to the national officer of the GMWU, Mr David Basnett, to make the strike official was rejected.

Basnett promised the men that he would fight against their 'starvation' wages. But a striker drily observed: 'Starvation? They must have sent him from Biafra, all the good he's done for us.'

At the first mass meeting, Basnett showed his colours, bellowing, 'It's a bloody silly thing you've done' into the microphone. The stewards' committee capitulated immediately to his demands and they have aided him in attempting to get the men back.

The strike was run by a rank and file strike committee, made up of quiet, determined men like John Potter, Gerry Caughey and Bill Cowley, who met in an upstairs room of the Cotham Arms and reported frequently to mass meetings of workers.

Image

The lack of fight by the shop stewards runs counter to the traditional image of shop floor representatives. But these are not ordinary stewards.

Most of them are not elected by their workers, but are appointed by the union. It is recognised in the GMWU that the appointed post of shop steward is an important rung on the ladder towards a full-time post.

In other words, these are not stewards in the real sense of the word - elected shop floor representatives, sensitive to their members' needs and subject to immediate replacement if they fail.

The union has not spared lies and half-truths in its frenzy to end the strike. When Pilkington workers at Pontypool in Wales and in Scotland threatened solidarity action, GMWU officials got them back to work by insisting that the St Helens strikers had voted to return.

At Pontypool, 28 workers walked out when they found the truth. They

were sacked and the union has done nothing to help them.

At best, the union is grossly incompetent. Last week it gave the strikers £12 each (£6 for women) in 'hardship' money. The result is that the strikers' national assistance money has been slashed, plunging them further into difficulty.

The union has paid no strike money, of course, and the strike committee angrily called the £12 a cheap bribe. As one worker said, if the union had paid them £2 a week strike pay all along, it would not have affected their assistance money.

The GMWU has a built-in agreement with Pilkingtons whereby any worker who leaves the union is sacked. In spite of this police-state arrangement, the strikers are determined to get out of the union.

So far, 4000 workers have torn up their GMWU cards and every striker I spoke to had nothing but bitter animosity towards it. Unless they are hampered by the restrictions of the Bridlington Agreement against 'membership poaching', they intend to join the Transport and General Workers Union en masse.

A firm declaration from the TGWU that they will accept the men would not go amiss.

But the local official of the TGWU, Jimmy McKeagen, is doing his best for the strikers by organising collections at factories in the area.

Striker Brian Gavin pointed out that at one of these factories, British Insulated Callenders Cables, the rate for women workers was 9s an hour, compared to the male rate of 6s 10d at Pilkingtons.

He also spoke warmly of the response of the local people towards the strikers.

'They offer us money and cigarettes,' he said. 'One man offered a striker £3 and said "pay it back when the strike's over"'. An old-age pensioner pressed 4s in one man's hand.'

The response to the strikers' demand for £10 a week more (£5 now and £5 to follow) was a miserly £3 from Pilkingtons. Although this has been rejected by the workers, the management has given a £3 increase to the staff workers and fitters still crossing the picket line.

turn to page 5

LITTLE LORD KNEELS AT THE FOOT OF HIS BED

The following lines are dedicated to Lord Cooper, General Secretary of the General and Municipal Workers Union. (You will remember the GMWU - it used to be the workers' union at Pilkingtons. It finished on 10 May 1970. R.I.P.)

To the tune of Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

Little Lord kneels at the foot of the bed
Looks underneath to see if there's a Red
Hush, hush, whisper who dares
Little Lord Cooper is saying his prayers.

God Bless Lord Harry - I know that's right
With a fellow Lord I never shall fight
For he's so right, and the men so wrong
Oh, God bless Bradburn* and make him strong.

If I open my fingers a little bit more
I'll see Caughey's shadow behind the door
And lift my arm, and I'll throw more mud
Oh, God bless Caughey and make him good.

I'll close down the office and stay in my bed
With fibreglass sheets right over my head
And keep wage agreements exceedingly small
And pretend to myself there's no strike at all.

Thank you God, for a lovely day
For long, long hours, and low, low pay
I've missed out something - now what can it be?
Ah, now I remember it - GOD HELP ME!

* Right-wing shop steward who started the 'Red scare'. - from the rank and file strike committee's Bulletin.

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'This book should be in possession of every trade unionist who intends defending and improving his members' wages and conditions.'
Last British Leyland Contractor
'A concise and thorough explanation of the many pitfalls which exist for workers under the guise of productivity bargaining. A book that every trade unionist ought to read.'

the employers' offensive productivity deals and how to fight them by Tony Cliff

Big business demands new crack-down in the universities

by Martin Shaw

'I WAS interested when driving Ted Heath back here from Bury on Friday to hear an infinitely more alarming report on student behaviour at other universities than you had reported at our meeting. To quote one instance, I gather the "anarchists" have virtually taken over Balliol College. There is a feeling that the authorities have completely lost control of discipline...'

This is Lord Derby, Pro-Chancellor of Lancaster University and leading industrialist, demanding stiffer student discipline in a confidential letter to Mr Charles Carter, his Vice-Chancellor.

The document, published by Lancaster Socialist Society's magazine Spark, shows the tie-up between business interests on university councils and the Tory 'law and order' campaign.

'Law and order' is part of the background to the recent wave of expulsions, suspensions, fines and even jailings of militant students by university authorities.

These actions have a counterpart in the recent witchhunts of the Pilkington strike committee and of Mrs Rosemary Whipple, the socialist sacked at Girling's amid press hysteria.

But why are university authorities and politicians particularly worried by student militancy? Is student action mindless, without any rational goal? Or can it develop into a socialist threat to the big business interests which rule our society.

Wave of unrest

Students at Warwick University, who four months ago started the biggest wave of student 'unrest' in this country, began by objecting to the university's failure to provide them with a social building. Then they discovered that the university was helping Rootes Motors to spy on staff, students and trade unionists. They ended up fighting business domination of the university government and courses.

The set-up at Warwick has been exposed in E P Thompson's Warwick University Ltd (Penguin 6s).

But recently, even greater scandals of 'the business university' have come to light at Lancaster and Sussex. Business schools in uni-



Slogan seen at Manchester when the uproar started over campus spies

versities have expanded rapidly in recent years, financed by big firms and often providing considerable services for them.

And the cases of the Operational Research departments at Lancaster and Sussex show how this development changes the nature of the activity of a university and its lecturers.

Market services

The OR departments at these two universities planned to set up an Institute of Operational Research as a company to market university teachers' services to other firms. Lecturers already receiving £3000 a year from the university would be paid £50 a day extra for consultancy work. Those earning under £2000 a year would have got £30 a day.

Students studying for higher degrees would also be hired out, and be required to work for the Institute after ending their course.

The Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster, justifying this, has pointed out that staff at Oxford and Cambridge earn an average of £384 a year (which means a lot more for some of them) from consultancy. This only goes to show how the trend for academics to become privileged retainers of business is well established.

The Lancaster-Sussex venture (now Lancaster only, as opposition at Sussex has forced them to pull out) organises this more efficiently to secure a larger rake-off.

The 'crime' of socialist students in these and other universities has been to say that the university should not be a centre for business, marketing, advertising, financial

control and operational research studies, work study, etc.

These subjects have no value except in boosting the profits of big business and lining the pockets of those who practise them. They are of no value to the workers out of whose labour the profits — and the huge fees of academic consultants — must come.

The problem the students face is that by themselves they cannot effectively check the trend towards the business university, still less change the universities into centres serving the real needs of society. On the contrary, if they take action, they quickly lay themselves open to the kind of disciplinary attacks which have swept the universities in the last month or so. And a new pamphlet by Manchester IS students, 13½ Days That Shook the University (1s 6d post free from M Thomas, 13 Mauldeth Road West, Withington, Manchester 20), shows just how difficult it is for mass student action to wrest even small defensive gains from the authorities.

Asserts control

(This pamphlet on the March 1970 sit-in at Manchester is an excellent account of the strategic, tactical and organisational problems of militants within a student movement, although non-Manchester readers may find the detail a little overpowering.)

The battles the students are waging in the universities will only be won when the working class sees its interests in these struggles and asserts its control over the universities along with the rest of society.

What happened at Pilks

from page 4

The fitters' union, the AEF, has refused the increase.

Pilkingtons, of course, have pleaded poverty as the reason for their inability to improve on the £3 offer. Their £20m profit last year and the £8m being spent on a new fibreglass plant belie this.

And the firm's announcement that the strikers have lost £1m in wages and the firm £3m in exports alone during the strike gives some idea of the exploitation in their factories.

The strike was run democratically in the true sense of the word. The strike committee called frequent mass meetings and all decisions were voted on in public.

On the day I was in St Helens the strike committee debated the problem of whether to accept a ballot on a return to work. The union had organised a ballot several weeks before and had not published the result. Strikers accused them of rigging the voting.

This time the union had asked local clergymen to supervise the ballot — a not inappropriate gesture, as the method by which the GMWU chooses its officials has some similarity with the 'laying on of hands' appointment of bishops in the Anglican church.

The strike committee finally decided to accept the ballot, confident that the overwhelming majority would vote to stay out until the company improved on its offer. It is debatable whether or not the decision was right — what is important is that the decision was a completely democratic one, reached after hours of discussion.

This needs to be stressed, for the press and television have painted a lurid picture of a few gullible men in St Helens being led by the nose by a handful of undercover 'reds'. The local papers, in particular, are full of unsubstantiated stories of the rising tide of violence in the town since the strike began.

The strikers angrily deny that there has been any violence by them. As one of them said: 'Violence? What could be more provocative than Pilkington offering £3 to those at work?'

'But there's not been one arrest during the strike. The only violence has come from a blackleg, who butted a picket.'

The strikers are supported by the local police. Superintendent Shepherd told me: 'The strike has been remarkably peaceful and very free from violence. The window of a union official has been smashed and the police are still looking into this.'

The strikers are convinced that the smashed window was the act of anti-strike provocateurs.

As for the 'reds', there is only one supporter of Chairman Mao in the town and he is quite inactive, having recently got married. Local International Socialists have helped produce leaflets, but it is sheer nonsense to think they are running the strike.

In 10 years of industrial reporting I have not met more patently honest, sincere and devoted men as the Pilkington strike committee — honestly, sincerely and devotedly dedicated to winning a decent wage for their workers.

Moderate

They are politically moderate, several of them are in the Labour Party (Potter and Cowley are Labour councillors) and the most extreme view I heard was: 'Yes, perhaps there should be a degree of workers' control in industry.'

But the millionaire press barons are not concerned with honesty, sincerity and dedication. A strike of this duration and solidarity is seen as a threat to all they hold dear — the sanctity of private property and the right of a handful of men to grow wealthy from the sweat of thousands. St Helens teems with reporters and cameramen. They stay close to the pubs.

They do not venture through the town, writing of the dreadful housing conditions and lack of amenities. They do not speak of the enormous profits of Pilkingtons and the vast personal wealth accrued by the five directors who are among the richest men in Britain.

No, their job is to denigrate, hound and witch-hunt the ordinary working men who run the strike without thought of personal gain and who have all made considerable sacrifices in their determination to win the dispute.

The tired, moth-eaten clichés are dusted down and trotted out again by the press — 'Communists,

Trotskyists, trouble-makers, harming the national interest, subversives'.

But if 'subversive' means to undermine, then it is the reactionary and tiny group of men who own the 'free' press who are the real subversives. With their distortions of the truth, their twisted values and cheap sensationalism, they seek to undermine and bottle up the enormous potential of the working people of this country.

This potential can be glimpsed at St Helens. There, the working people of one small town point the way forward to a decent and humane society where the profiteering Pilkingtons and their class are consigned to a footnote in the history books.

Cottons Column

LBW, our cricket correspondent, writes: If you thought the MCC's fervent support for the South African tour was based solely on 'sporting' considerations, prepare to be disillusioned.

The new president of MCC and the Cricket Council is to be Sir Cyril Hawker, chairman of the Standard Bank. The Daily Telegraph comments that Sir Cyril's chairmanship of the bank has 'given him a close insight into South African affairs and there may be many in that troubled country who will be happy at the news of his appointment.' Like other bankers, no doubt.

The Standard Bank is partly owned by the National Westminster and Midland Banks and is the parent company of the Standard Bank of South Africa. This is the largest banking group in South Africa, with more than 800 branches.

Along with the South African government, Standard is part owner of the largest merchant bank in South Africa, Sentak. Standard also has branches in Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia.

So when the port-soaked reactionaries who run the MCC speak of 'keeping the door open' to South Africa through the cricket tour, it's clear it's the bank door they're referring to.

WHAT with Barclays and now Standard having strong stakes in the racist regimes of Southern Africa, it's getting difficult to know where to deposit your cash (if you have any to deposit, that is).

One opponent of apartheid indignantly rang the local branch of Barclays and said she was forthwith withdrawing her money because of the bank's links with South Africa.

'Indeed, madam?' was the laconic reply. 'And where shall we send your 15s 3d overdraft?'

Dealing with splinter groups

BEWARE the curse of Pilkington, my son: SW's reporter had scarce set foot in the glass town last week when the right lens of his spectacles fell from the frame and smashed in a thousand fragments.

And another SW man heading for St Helens never arrived at all. The windscreens of the coach in which he was travelling mysteriously shattered on the M1.

They must be teaching 'em how to cast spells on management courses these days. It's the only way left to beat the militants.

Timely advice

THE shop stewards committee in one of Glasgow's big power stations got wind of what was on the agenda of their next bi-monthly meeting with the management.

It was rumoured they might threaten disciplinary action for bad timekeeping. And 'bad' it was, with enough lateness to make defence difficult.

What to do? The stewards decided to conduct a few inquiries into the arrival time of those who supposedly ran the place.

One of them was stationed daily to time the bosses. The earliest was

seven minutes late. The latest — 40 minutes — was the general manager of the station.

Stewards called a mass meeting to inform workers that management intended to raise the timekeeping question at the next bi-monthly.

They threw in the results of their own timekeeping survey for good measure, knowing that the grapevine worked both ways.

Timekeeping did not appear on the meeting's agenda...

SCOTLAND's Tories have just spent a rousing week debating their utopia. Among some of the marvelous reforms proposed in the law and order debate was the sterilisation of male sex offenders.

Another was that prisoners should be used as target markers on rifle ranges. And unsuccessful leaders of the Opposition?

Foul play

IN BRITAIN a star professional footballer plays 50 games a year on average.

Pele, the Latin American star plays about 150 a season. He can't allow himself to stop, because his sponsors — the people whose elastic keeps his pants up — would scream with rage and cancel his contracts.

Joao Saldanha, manager of the Brazilian side, was sacked for trying to rest Pele. He tried to fight this big business stranglehold.

Pele has awful sore ankles and Saldanha is unemployed.

Come the revolution, we should see some nice football.

Thumbs down from Upgren

IN MARCH 1962 Arthur Upgren, an American economist, predicted that the next US financial crisis would come at 10.30 am on 18 November 1970.

Last week he admitted he was wrong. He had made his first forecast without a calendar. So last week he thought it right to get the date right. After all it was a fairly important event he was dealing with.

The Upgren forecast is only partly in jest. The serious part is pegged to bank liquidity — total reserves in relation to deposits.

In 1962 the ratio was 45 per cent and falling. It is now down to 23 per cent, Upgren noted — the level it reached just before the 1929 crash.

Citing six serious financial crises from 1873 to 1933, Upgren stated that US capitalism always went bust when liquidity got down to 23 per cent.

Just in case he's right, Mr Upgren sold all his stocks and shares.

YOU have all been worried, of course, about the fate of Mr Aubrey Jones, boss of the Prices and Incomes Board at £15,000.

The PIB is no more. It is being merged with the Monopolies Commission into the new Commission on Industry and Manpower.

Redundancy pay for Aubrey? Not on your life. He's to head the new monster commission, at £18,000 a year.

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Please send further details of the meetings and activities of the International Socialists to:

Name _____

Address _____

Send to IS, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2.

Socialist Worker

Print militant sacked in new St Helens battle

ST HELENS:- Pilkingtons is not the only factory where militants are fighting both bosses and unions. Alan Sutton, a member of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades and father of the chapel (shop steward) at Pakcel Ltd. has been fighting for recognition for his members for a year. Last year, Pakcel workers decided to kick out the right-wing General and Municipal Workers

Union and replace it by SOGAT and the National Graphical Association. **Joint venture** The two print unions began the struggle as a joint venture. But last week Mr Sutton was told by management that the company had signed an agreement on factory organisation with the GMWU and the NGA. The management added that none

of the three parties would tolerate another union in the plant. They told Mr Sutton he was to be instantly dismissed for 'furthering the aims of another union' and for breaking works rules by posting a union notice within the plant. Mr Sutton's case has been taken up by SOGAT officials. Meanwhile, he is attempting to find a copy of the works rules which he is alleged to have broken.

Cov-Rads workers show the way SW Reporter

WORKERS at Coventry Radiators, part of the £250m Associated Engineering Group, have exploded the employers' myth that wage increases can only be won by selling working conditions. Since Christmas, wages at Cov Rads have risen by more than 2s6d an hour — and there has been no speed-up, no extra mobility, no job evaluation and no sale of tea breaks. Minimum weekly wages are now: Press Operators — £29. Labourers and drivers — £29. Setters — £39. Maintenance men — £35. These wages have been gained by the refusal of the operators to move off the piece-work system. The earnings of most other workers are tied to the average piece-rate earnings of the operators. The average normally rises by about 8d an hour every year. Since Christmas, because of negotiations for a new price for the piece-rate standard, it has risen by 2s 3d.

Bound together

The piece-rate system, in spite of its many disadvantages, has the effect of ensuring that earnings can just about keep up with a continually rising cost of living. It also ensures at Cov Rads that all workers are effectively bound together and can show a united front to the bosses when they go after increases. The press operators are the spearhead of this unity. It was a five-week strike by the operators last Christmas which spread confidence around the factory floor, put the bosses on the run and led to the huge increases.

These actions are a direct reply to the bosses' offensive. AE has managed to worm in productivity in some shape or form at all its factories, except Cov Rads.

Wages for operators at Wellworthy's, Hepworths and Brico (AE plants in Leeds, Southampton, Sunderland, Warwick and Coventry) are as low as 10s an hour. Operators at Cov Rads can earn from 14s 6d to £1 an hour.

Further increases

But Cov Rads is isolated. Convenor George Anderson, backed by the militancy of his stewards and men, is going after further increases. But if Cov Rads does not have the support of workers in the rest of the AE combine, its militancy, wages and conditions will eventually be smashed. The bosses will exploit its isolation, provoke a strike and force a lockout. So the slogans for all AE workers must be: Parity of earnings and conditions with Coventry Radiators and Strengthen the combine committee — Cov Rads cannot take on the bosses alone.

NEXT WEEK Socialist Worker will print an important article on Ford.

NO STRINGS VICTORY SAY DEVON STRIKERS

SW Reporter

OTTERY ST MARY, DEVON:- 300 strikers at the Ottermill Switchgear factory have been on strike for three weeks to back their claim for an across the board increase in their basic rate.

The management have declared that they will not negotiate until the men are back at work — and only then on a productivity agreement. Last week at a mass meeting the strikers voted unanimously against a return to work and declared their intention to have a victory without productivity strings.

There is an echo of the Pilkington dispute here. The local press have enlarged what was an anonymous phone call into a statement by some strikers of a 'communist plot'. At their mass meeting last week the men voted to send a message of support to the Pilkington strikers.

The management at Switchgear have tried various tactics to scare and divide the strikers, but with no success. This was shown by the solidarity of last week's meeting.

The threat of redundancies has now been enlarged into a straight management ultimatum: 'Return to work by next Friday (22 May) or collect your cards.'

The shop stewards are not frightened by these threats. They point to the recent Centrax strike victory in this area where the strikers had at least four ultimatums and final offers.

As part of the management's scare tactics they claim that a shop steward of the Metal Mechanics' Union who has just given in his notice did so because he lacked confidence in the strikers' case.

This is totally misleading. The steward in question applied for the new job two weeks before the strike started, and has just had it confirmed.

STAY OUT

At a mass meeting in Ottery on Monday the men decided to stay out and tear up the management notices threatening them with the sack.

There are hopes that the main union, the General and Municipal Workers, will make the strike official.

The strike committee is maintaining its links with the Centrax factories and a joint meeting to plan tactics is likely to be held later this week.

Funds are urgently needed. Send to: P Coward, 83 Slade Close, Ottery St Mary, Nr Exeter, Devon.

Strike may hit election poll

MEMBERS of the National and Local Government Officers Association may call for strike action on 18 June — election polling day — unless they receive a satisfactory reply to a wage claim.

NALGO is demanding a 15 per cent increase for its 270,000 members. The request will be considered by the union's national local government committee. If the strike went ahead, no officials would be on duty in polling stations



Ottermill strikers on the march in Devon

Union officials victimised in prod deal dispute

EDINBURGH:- 750 members of the Amalgamated Society of Wire-Drawers and Kindred Workers have been on unofficial strike since 5 May at the United Wireworks.

They want £5 a week more and the withdrawal of a clause in a productivity agreement.

Solidarity has been 100 per cent. In a bid to break the workers' unity, management have sent out an ultimatum instructing all the strikers to return to work or face the sack.

Three union branch officials, five shop stewards and one member of the works safety committee have already been sacked.

The management have tried without success to discredit the officials by claiming that they had defied a union executive recommendation to accept the disputed productivity clause. But this is a lie — at no time has the union executive recommended accepting the clause.

The victimisation of the officials did not frighten the workers. 500

men turned out on the picket line on Monday.

- A mass meeting demanded: 1. Withdrawal of the clause. 2. A substantial wage increase. 3. Reinstatement of all victimised militants. 4. Make the strike official.

The meeting voted to stay out, with or without union support, until the first three demands are met.

PAKISTANI SACKED

THE BBC has sacked Mr Sifkat Kadri, who takes part in the programme for immigrants Make Yourself at Home, because of his political activities.

Mr Kadri is legal adviser to the Pakistani Workers' Union. He commented: 'I am not a member of any left wing party but it is well known that the BBC has many members of the Conservative Party among its staff.'

Immigrants back Powell protest

SW Reporter

MORE THAN 600 people demonstrated on Monday evening outside Copland School in Wembley, North London against a visit by Enoch Powell.

The demonstration was called by a number of organisations, including local International Socialists, Young Communists, Communist Party, the trades council, Indian Marxist-Leninist Association and the West Indian Standing Conference.

The protest was successful in attracting a good turnout from local West Indian and Asian immigrants, especially young people.

Appealed

Police were called in to usher Powell and his supporters in and out of the building.

The protest's organisers had earlier appealed to the local Tory council to cancel the visit. But the appeal was rejected, no doubt under pressure from the Tory leader, Alderman Lee, who is a fervent Powell supporter.

In the build up to the protest, thousands of leaflets were given out and street meetings were held.

NOTICES

THIS SUNDAY — APRIL 24 Important meeting for all socialists in South London 'The Cause of the Present Financial Alarms' - MICHAEL KIDRON will speak on the significance of recent storm signals from Wall Street and other financial markets — and their implication for the working class. The William Morris Hall, The Broadway, Wimbledon 8pm.

Now available — Michael Kidron's book Western Capitalism Since the War, Pelican 6s, from IS Book Service, 6 Cottons Gardens, E2.

SWANSEA IS: Open meeting on the Rise of German Fascism 29 May, Elysium buildings 7.30pm All welcome

TRADE union day school. Tony Cliff on prod deals. Trade union sponsored meeting. The Lamb with Two Necks,

Shude Hill, Manchester Sunday 31 May 11-5.

AIR/VILLA holiday in Yugoslavia. IS comrade or left-winger required to join party of four IS comrades renting a villa at Split 26 July to 9 August 1970. Cost of flight plus rent £50. Enquiries to Nigel Wade 5a Palmerston Rd, London N22. 888 4165.

RICHMOND Stop the 70 Tour group public meeting Tues 26 May 8pm. Starr House, 57 Church Road, Richmond

NORTH LONDON IS: public meeting on Productivity Deals: the employers' offensive. Tony Cliff and Mike Cooley, Vice President of DATA. Thurs 28 May George Robey pub, opp Finsbury Park Astoria, Seven Sisters Road 8pm.

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Crossman's handout will be eaten up by rising prices

by Richard Kirkwood

AS PART of Labour's election build-up, Richard Crossman last week announced a rise in Supplementary Benefits.

But by the time pensioners and the unemployed actually get the increase next November it will have been eaten away by price rises already running at the rate of 8 per cent a year.

This has been the case with every increase since the system was created. Labour's increases

have only made up the gap left by the Tories, who actually let the living standard of the old and unemployed go down.

The rises bring the pensioners and the unemployed up to the princely sum of £5 4s for a single person and £8 10s for a couple, plus rent. But the Supplementary Benefits Commission (the NAB to you and me) only pays a 'reasonable' rent.

Many victims of landlordism and council rent rises have found to their cost that their rent will not get paid.

The benefit rates are still the same proportion as ever of average earnings (£24 a week as a result of workers' struggles) and leave pensioners, the disabled and the unemployed on the poverty line.

Labour's promised 'new deal' must raise a hollow laugh among these groups as unemployment goes on steadily rising. In any case the benefits are not a right and are hedged round with 'discretions'.

Socialists must continue to demand a decent standard of living as a right for the victims of big business 'rationalisation'.