

Socialist Worker

FOR WORKERS' CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM 214 3 APRIL 1971 2½p

E. Pakistan — Yahya's massacre

by Nigel Harris

THE PAKISTAN military machine cannot hold East Pakistan by the direct use of force. It can only do so by killing or jailing so many people that the rest — 73 million Bengalis — will be terrorised into obedience.

There are no civilised frills on it. President Yahya Khan is gambling that if he hits enough heads, the rest will bow. For the moment he has the benefit of surprise.

With his tanks painting the cities of the East with fire, the shock of declaring brutal war has gone to the army's advantage. The Bengalis were not seriously prepared for fighting at all. But the military advantage will not last long unless the army can completely demoralise the urban population at least.

The unpreparedness was the direct result of the leadership of Mujib-ur-Rahman and his Awami League, the leadership of East Pakistan. The whole province has demanded a declaration of independence from West Pakistan for weeks past, yet Mujib throughout has resisted.

He preferred to stall, to talk with Yahya Khan and Bhutto. His dithering not only allowed Yahya Khan to build up the military in the East and prepare for a blood letting, it will also mean far more Bengalis will be slaughtered. So much for 'moderation'.

Butto's colours

Yet the military coup in the East has clarified many other issues besides the leadership of Mujib. It has revealed the colours of Bhutto, the popular hero of the West. With the sound of gunshot and screams still in his ears, as soon as he arrived back from the East, he declared: 'By the grace of Almighty God, Pakistan is saved'.

At any rate, the military regime and Bhutto are for the moment 'saved'. Yet, ironically, in the longer term, Bhutto's survival depends on Mujib's success. If Mujib and the Bengalis can be put down by force, Yahya and his army will have little need to worry about Bhutto.

If revolution does not succeed in the East, reforms certainly will not in the West. Both the local nationalisms of the non-Punjabi provinces of the West, as well as the popular demands of the Punjabi workers and peasants, cannot at all be advanced if the Bengalis are crushed.

Rough up

On the contrary, a victory in the East will lay the foundations for a much more aggressively reactionary regime in the West.

The choice for the Left is very clear. Yahya's attempt to rough up the Bengalis polarises issues as nothing else could. On the one hand, the struggle for national independence and popular power in East and West, on the other, the army and West Pakistani capitalism, the mixture as before.

Nor is the issue confined to Pakistan. For the struggle for freedom in East Bengal in Pakistan is an object lesson for the struggle in West Bengal in India. If it is crushed in Pakistan, the prospects look much grimmer in India as a result.

The political alternative being manufactured in East Pakistan at this very moment will have been crushed. And the ruling classes, watching East Pakistan from the also-threatened fortresses of India and Ceylon, will have had an object lesson in the use of force to preserve class power.

Great speed

President Yahya Khan's act of naked aggression against an unarmed people shows how desperate the ruling class of Pakistan has become. Bengalis are not some minority. They are a majority of Pakistanis and bigger than any European nation apart from the Russians.

It is in the interests of all the ruling classes of Asia that Yahya should put down the virus of revolution in his own territories. The state of health of most of Asia means the virus could spread with great speed.

And on the other side, for the Left, support for Bengali nationalism has now become the vital precondition, not just of the struggle for socialism, but any progress at all.

STRIKE PAY: A NEW



THREAT TO WORKERS' FAMILIES

by LIONEL SIMS

WORKERS WHO GO ON STRIKE face a new and vicious political attack from the Tories. Before the summer is over the government's new Social Security Bill will:

- Stop all benefits for the first three days of sickness, injury or unemployment.
- Increase penalties for being unemployed.
- Allow the bosses to dock wages according to the amount of benefit a worker obtains between returning to work and receiving the first wage packet.
- Cut severely benefits for rent and family while a worker is on strike.

The idea for stopping the back payment for the three 'waiting days' was taken straight from Roy Jenkins when Labour was in office in 1968. Yet Labour MPs this week called the Bill 'an act of mean and vicious class legislation'.

Labour's idea

It's true. The idea has been pinched from Jenkins by Sir Keith Joseph and will save the bosses' government £19 million a year. Once again, Labour paved the way for the Tories' attack.

For working people who have not lost their dignity, those who refuse to take degrading jobs when they are unemployed, or who don't satisfy the employers' demands of servility and are sacked, they will get just over £2 taken from their benefits. That's well over double the old penalty of 75 new pence.

The Tories will also force employees resuming work after a strike to accept subs from their employers instead of getting supplementary benefit to tide things over.

This comes just a week after a new Top Hat tax fiddle became public knowledge. Large companies in Britain send their top executives abroad for a holiday. They get pay and benefits by setting up a limited company for the duration of their holiday that under continental tax laws bypasses the strings attached to company formation in Britain.

Swindle

The Tory bigots mince words about a few pounds for people who work, but swindle thousands for those who don't work.

But the most important part of this package is the design to turn wife against husband, to make the isolated concerns of home and family divide and demoralise the collective strength of the shop floor.

At the moment anyone who goes on strike cannot receive unemployment benefit. But supplementary benefit can at the moment be paid for their dependent families and the rent.

The calculation for benefit is made by ignoring all tax refunds, strike pay and other personal income up to £4.35 a week. Under the new Bill, the exemption rate will be lowered to £1.

Since the average benefit received is around £6 this means a one-third cut in money to cope on while on strike.

Previously, wives and children were only affected insofar as the husband received no benefit. Now the proposal is to

Big march counters fascist rally

TWO THOUSAND anti-fascists marched through Hitchin, Herts, last Saturday to counter a rally by the racist, anti-trade union National Front. The Front had been forced to stage their march in the small Home Counties town when a joint rally with another fascist organisation in London's Trafalgar Square was cancelled after widespread public protest.

The Front managed to muster only 400 national supporters for their march but they were well protected by strong police contingents. Draped in Union Jacks, the NF rally was reminiscent of Mosley's pro-Hitler demonstrations in the 1930s. The counter march was supported by the Indian Workers' Association and black and socialist organisations. Pictures: Mike Cohen.

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Paul Foot

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The Bill: where we go from here

THE MOVEMENT against the government's anti-working class policies has come a long way in the last six months. The two million workers that stopped work on 18 March marked an important advance on the 500,000 that struck on 8 December.

But the TUC's decisions at Croydon mean that the advance will be slowed down – if only temporarily. But that does not mean the fight against the Bill is over. Far from it. The campaign must go on and it can be successful.

The important thing for militants and socialists to appreciate is that while the goal remains the same – the defeat of the Bill and the Tories – the tactics have to be changed necessarily after the Croydon decisions. Up until the special congress, the main rallying cry of the militants has been for the TUC to call a General Strike against the Bill. Growing anger at the whole range of government measures expressed itself in the feeling that the trade union movement could and should take industrial action to defend itself.

The anger still exists. The need for militant action remains. But the TUC vote against strike action means that, even for a short period, the main slogans of the fight against legislation will have to be different.

The question of registration is vital. The law cannot be effective against the entire trade union movement or even against a large section of it. The government knows this. It hopes that it will be able to take on and defeat isolated sections of the movement one at a time, using the old tactic of divide and rule.

Its hopes are centred on the fact that much of the law will actually strengthen the trade union officials over the rank and file, but registration means that the rights of the rank and file to take action will be curtailed. Many union leaders see the advantages of a situation in which their members' strength is cut back. That is why they rejected the idea that non-registration should be a condition of TUC membership.

Of course, the 'left' leaders dare not argue openly for registration. Collaboration with the government would not endear them to rank and file activists. But they are now using the excuse that if one union registers then the rest will be forced to follow suit. Even Jack Jones of the Transport Workers has said that if the Local Government Workers register then his union will have to do the same.

The task for militants in the months ahead is to expose the double talk of union leaders who claimed they were against collaboration with the government at Croydon and yet are privately preparing to register. Rank and file trade unionists must launch a campaign in their organisations to demand that their leaders declare their refusal to register.

There must be growing pressure as well for total non-co-operation with the Bill. The unions must be won to a policy of declaring all shop-floor action official. What the Bill defines as 'unfair actions' – local strikes, blacking of goods, refusal to cross picket lines, making collections for 'unfair' strikes – must all become official union policy.

The law must be broken and defied. That is why the demand for a national one-day strike on the day the Bill becomes law must be fought for through the unions and at the conference called on 24 April by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

The rank and file are the key to success in the struggle against the Bill. Councils of Action, made up of delegates from workplaces in every locality, remain essential to that success. National action and Councils of Action are not mutually exclusive alternatives – they are inseparable. The Councils are a method of linking and deepening the struggle of local militants who will both defend anybody victimised under the law and step up the fight for meaningful action within the unions.

Croydon was a setback. It was not a defeat. If we redouble our efforts to build grass roots councils that will spearhead the fight for non-registration and non-co-operation, not only can the law be smashed but the growing political awareness of workers taking part in that battle can lay the basis for a genuine revolutionary socialist party

FAULKNER: THE TRIUMPH OF BIGOTRY

THE PRESS has tried to give the impression that the election of Brian Faulkner as head of the Unionist Party and prime minister of Northern Ireland has been a triumph for 'moderation'. But in fact nothing has been done to solve the problems of the province.

The 7 per cent unemployment will continue. The miserable housing conditions for working-class people remains along with the discrimination against the Roman Catholic section of the working class in both housing and jobs.

Meanwhile the wealth of the country, which could be used to improve the conditions of both Catholic and Protestant workers, will continue to leave the province as its owners search for bigger profits abroad. Faulkner may try to press ahead with certain minor reforms to make the degree of discrimination less apparent. But he cannot go too far for fear of upsetting the mass basis of his Party – the extreme anti-Catholicism that has been fostered by those who benefit from British rule in Northern Ireland.

Faulkner was one of the keenest supporters of such a policy for many years. He changed his line only when he saw that it might be embarrassing to British big business's large investments in southern Ireland.

Faulkner and our own Tory government will attempt to use the sectarian bitterness they have created in order to justify their use of troops and police. They will claim they are keeping 'order' when they club down protesting demonstrators.

Our sympathy should not be with them, but with those who are trying to build a movement to throw British big business and its troops out of Ireland. But that struggle will not be successful while it confines itself to fighting the troops. Real success can only come when a movement develops that is able to pose united working-class action as an alternative to rule by British big business.

BIG STRIKE WAVE AS NIGERIA JAILS 2 UNION LEADERS

by Wenda Glenaghen

THE NIGERIAN military government has turned on the working class. Strikes, sparking off enormous state repression, have broken out following the arrest of leading trade unionists.

Since the end of the civil war, in which the breakaway state of Biafra was beaten into submission, the Nigerian ruling class has been undecided about when to launch the attack on the workers.

The Federal government made all strikes illegal in 1969 during the civil war. But the law has been effectively ignored and many militant strikes were staged in the docks, mines, modern assembly industries and in the large state sector.

During and immediately after the war the government could not smash the strikers. They were spending a great deal of energy in putting down the 'Biafran rebels' and they were having to deal also with revolt in the countryside.

Farmers in the western state refused to pay their taxes to the state government. The main crop in the area is cocoa, grown on family holdings.

For the last six years cocoa has been getting rock-bottom prices on the world market. The farmers cannot pay the same taxes as they did when cocoa was more profitable.

Revolts have been growing in intensity over the last three years. The farmers know that the government has been spending millions of pounds fighting the civil war.

PROTEST

They know that new oil profits from the area which was once Biafra are enormous. And they know that they are not benefiting from this new wealth.

In September 1969, at the town of Egba Obafemi, hundreds of local farmers, wielding home-made guns, cudgels and cutlasses, burnt out the town hall, the police station and council offices as a protest against the taxes. The revolt lasted a week before state forces were able to stamp out the insurrection, leaving 50 people dead.

At a village near Ibadan, the capital city of the west, 200 special anti-tax riot police arrived to help out the local tax collectors. They were greeted by a barrage of bullets from the home-made guns of the peasants.

In Ibadan itself two months later, an armed crowd stormed the Agodi prison, freeing more than 400 prisoners, many of whom were tax offenders. At this point the police admitted defeat and called in the army.

One result of the Biafran war was that people had access to arms. They were smuggled from the front or brought home by deserting soldiers.



GOWON: restore 'law and order'

This has enabled the people to fight the forces of the state. The state itself, ever since the end of the civil war, has not dared to demobilise any of the 80,000 strong army that it recruited to fight the Biafrans.

The people are also preparing. The attack on the organised working class in Nigeria has arrived. It is part of an all-out attempt by the Gowon government to create 'law and order', not only in the countryside but also in the towns.

Massive strikes took place during the civil war. In October 1969, there was a nationwide sit-down strike by postal workers over non-recognition of their union. This was followed by a strike of workers in the state-owned Bank of Nigeria.

The strikes brought violent clashes between strikers and anti-riot police. The government reacted by introducing a decree that made it an offence, punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment, to 'threaten, organise or to do an act preparatory to organising' a strike or lockout.

Left-wing newspapers were threatened by a clause that made it an equal offence to 'publish any matter which by reason of dramatisation or other defects in the manner of its presentation is likely to cause public alarm or industrial unrest'. But the organised workers knew their strength and continued to strike.

The big clamp-down came two weeks ago. The police swooped to arrest Whab Goodluck and Samuel Bassey, leaders of the Nigerian Trade Union Congress. The NTUC is 'helped' by – though not directly affiliated to – the World Federation of Trade Unions, based in Prague.

The Nigerian trade union movement is

split along cold war lines. The right wing United Labour Congress is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, based in the USA.

But the NTUC is not openly Stalinist and, compared to the ULC, is very militant. Its programme is political.

It aims 'to work towards the establishment of a socialist society in Nigeria. Towards this end the NTUC shall work for the rapid industrialisation of Nigeria, the state ownership of the major industries and a properly planned economy'. But it does not talk of the seizure of state power.

Both Bassey and Goodluck, although full-time officials, were active in the General Strike of 1964. Bassey has had a long history of militancy. He took part in the General Strike of 1946 and later he organised the Posts and Telegraphs Union, but the British managed to sack him in 1954. He then became full-time general secretary of the Municipal Workers' Union.

The arrests of Goodluck and Bassey brought immediate massive strikes and demonstrations that were near to insurrection. Riot police were called out to break up a demonstration of 8000 trade union demonstrators in the centre of Lagos.

Demonstrating workers at an Italian car factory got the same treatment. Crowds of workers throughout the city overturned buses and deflated tyres to clog the streets.

Sit-down strikes, an effective tactic traditionally used by the Nigerian workers, spread like wildfire. In one area, workers barricaded roads but were beaten back by riot police and teargas.

ASSURANCE

No specific charge against Goodluck and Bassey has been laid. The ruling class is keeping quiet as it tests its strength against the workers on the streets.

It has been given assurance by the leader of the right-wing ULC. The ULC's general secretary Emmanuel Odeyemi said 'the release of the detained leaders can not be achieved by violent demonstrations'.

Their release and the end of state oppression can be achieved only by revolutionary politics that will help organise the militant Nigerian workers to seize state power on their own and the farmers' behalf.

Revolutionary socialist groups in Nigeria are working hard to forge an alliance between the workers and the farmers. The Gowon government's violent oppression against both classes of 'toilers' will help forge this alliance.

It is the farmers who have shown themselves ready to fight against the ruling class with arms. The workers will follow as more of their official (and moderate) leaders are jailed and state violence becomes even more intense.

There is no doubt that in the post-civil war situation in Nigeria, revolution is on the cards. It is up to the revolutionary socialist groups organising in Nigeria to make sure that the revolution will be one involving 'all the toilers' and one that will exist for 'all the toilers'.

LETTERS

Need for realistic policies

UP UNTIL December, Socialist Worker was consistent in following a correct line on how to fight the Industrial Relations Bill. Since that date, the paper has failed to put forward a constructive or consistent policy that industrial militants could follow.

It has vacillated from one week, stating 'Build Councils of Action' and in the next, presenting in an absurd and unconnected way, the call for a 'General Strike'. Headlines have reflected hysteria which in no way corresponds to the consciousness of the working class or the building of a revolutionary rank and file movement.

The call for a General Strike is only meaningful when linked to the selfactivity of the working class and the call to build Councils of Action.

Last week's edition was probably the worst so far. It said: 'TUC decisions must be implemented'. I thought the decisions were against strike action, against making non-registration a condition of membership, and merely 'recommended' a policy of co-operation.

This makes me feel quite schizophrenic because last week you were saying that a General Strike could defeat the Tories.

In the same editorial column, Socialist Worker has apparently entered the lists as the latest general of another one day strike which would give new heart to many other wise demoralised militants.

What arrant nonsense. Militants are not demoralised, they are thoroughly browned off with world-shaking gestures like the one just mentioned. They know the reality of the situation. Unless Socialist Worker can also show that it is aware of the same

realities, its credibility among the organised working class will decline as the struggle heightens.

'Build Councils of Action' is the line of the International Socialists. It is the correct line.

If Socialist Worker now adopts a policy of adhering to it with consistency and integrity, then it will probably manage to undo some of the harm that it has done.—HARRY TAIT, Edinburgh.

THE EDITOR replies: From the first, when the Tories' Industrial Relations Bill was published, we argued that it was necessary to prevent it from becoming law. This, we pointed out, could only be done by massive industrial action. Because we knew that the trade union leaders were looking for a compromise with the government instead of a fight we urged that Councils of Action should be built in every locality to conduct a real campaign to kill the Bill and force the trade union leaders to act.

During the months that followed, more and more trade union militants demanded that the TUC should call a General Strike to defeat the proposed anti-trade union legislation and we quite properly supported this. The pressure from these militants was able to force the AUEW and several other trade unions to call two one-day national protest strikes.

At Croydon on 18 March, the TUC rejected the call for industrial action and compulsory non-co-operation with the Bill if it becomes law.

Councils of Action are vitally important if the continuing job of opposing the legislation is to be carried out. This means

that they should organise a national strike of defiance on the day after the Bill becomes law, commit trade unions and shop stewards committees to support any workers victimised by the Tories, press for a militant policy at the September TUC and campaign to insist that at least those TUC decisions regarding non-registration are implemented.

This last point is very important because already some unions, including the TGWU have said that they will or might have to co-operate with the government.

The editorials of Socialist Worker have all been concerned with how to kill the Bill. The demands for a General Strike and the building of Councils of Action were not contradictory but, in fact, complementary. Without Councils of Action no General Strike could be called or won.

ELSIE FALCONER is a night cleaner. In her 16 years working for the Acme Cleaning Co she had risen to supervisor.

About a year ago she was told that she must move to a building on the other side of London, meaning more travelling time and more fares out of her wages, or else she was no longer required.

There was another alternative: a driving job (Elsie can't drive). She left, with no redundancy money and no holiday money. Elsie wrote to the company and to the papers: no joy. Elsie is now a member of the union.

We have a solicitor who will fight Elsie's case, and thinks he can win, but we badly need money for the legal costs. Any donations will be gratefully received.—MAY HOBBS, 13 Middle Lane, London N8.

TUC SAYS WAGES MUST RISE SLOWLY TO HELP PROFITS

HOT ON THE HEELS of the TUC's refusal to mount a serious fight against the anti-union Bill comes a hint of the next act of surrender. The Tories are determined to keep down wage increases and this campaign is linked to increasing unemployment and rising prices.

But the TUC is still prepared to talk with Heath and speak of 'co-operation' instead of fighting to defend workers' interests. Its Economic Review for the year outlines the Congress House version of how to solve economic problems — and it is a very similar version to the Tory Central Office one.

It does not demand a price freeze or even 'direct government intervention' to halt the rocketing cost of living, which is accepted as virtually inevitable.

And the document agrees that even if an expanding economy wages should rise only slowly 'to allow profits to recover'.

After that kind of introduction, it is no surprise that the Review's main proposals are little short of disastrous for workers. The TUC's 'incomes policy' offers nothing but rising prices with Vic Feather using the policeman's truncheon to stop wage demands.

There is no attempt to push up workers' earnings, which used to be the declared aim of the trade unions.

The main feature is 'cost of living threshold agreements'. The TUC says that if the cost of living rises above a declared 'threshold' a wage supplement is due automatically to workers.

But workers will not be entitled to any increase if inflation does not reach the declared threshold.

So if the threshold were set at 8 per cent a year and the cost of living rose by a substantial 7 per cent (which is more than likely — it was 10 per cent last year) the union leaders would sign away their members' rights to any increase at all.

Meanwhile, says the Review, manufacturers and retailers would be 'asked' to keep prices down. We know with what patriotic fervour they have responded to previous appeals. A few years of this kind of official union policy would result in real wages being lowered substantially.

INACCURATE

The question of relating earnings to the cost of living needs careful examination.

Firstly, the official cost of living index is inaccurate. It underestimates family expenditure on housing and other basics while overstating the amount spent on alcohol and tobacco. It does not include increases in wage deductions and in general underestimates by half the effect of inflation.

The gap between official figures and real increases in the cost of living has long been a problem for the

by **ALAN WOODWARD**



FEATHER: wield the truncheon

unions. During the last war, 'sliding-scale agreements' — where increases were more clearly geared to the cost of living — were widespread but even then the index understated price rises by more than 60 per cent.

As each new index is drawn up, the underestimate is carried forward and the bias against workers is reinforced. Occasional changes in weighting do not remove the basic defect.

A second drawback is the time lag.

Price increases have to be paid for straight away but any wage increase to make up for them can take months to settle.

Some cost of living agreements have been moderately effective. With varying results, workers in the furniture, building and printing trades have had such agreements but the advantages have been often 'sold' in productivity deals.

The willingness of union officials to sell such agreements has helped to clear the way for the TUC proposals.

EXAMINATION

The central problem is finding a cast-iron method of proving the exact amount of price increases. This means that any proposal to relate wages to prices needs careful examination.

Certain conditions should be insisted on:

Short periods of wage adjustment. Generous additional payments to overcome the defective index.

Unchallenged right to negotiate other increases not related to cost of living.

At factory level, some employers use the complications of cost of living

clauses to lengthen wage negotiations. 6000 Thorn workers in Enfield, North London, rejected recently the AUEW district secretary's advice and accepted a settlement with a cost of living clause.

The final offer was a rehash of an earlier one. It contained a moderate increase and the cost of living agreement suffered from the two main defects: reliance on the index and no allowance for the time lag between prices going up and wages being adjusted.

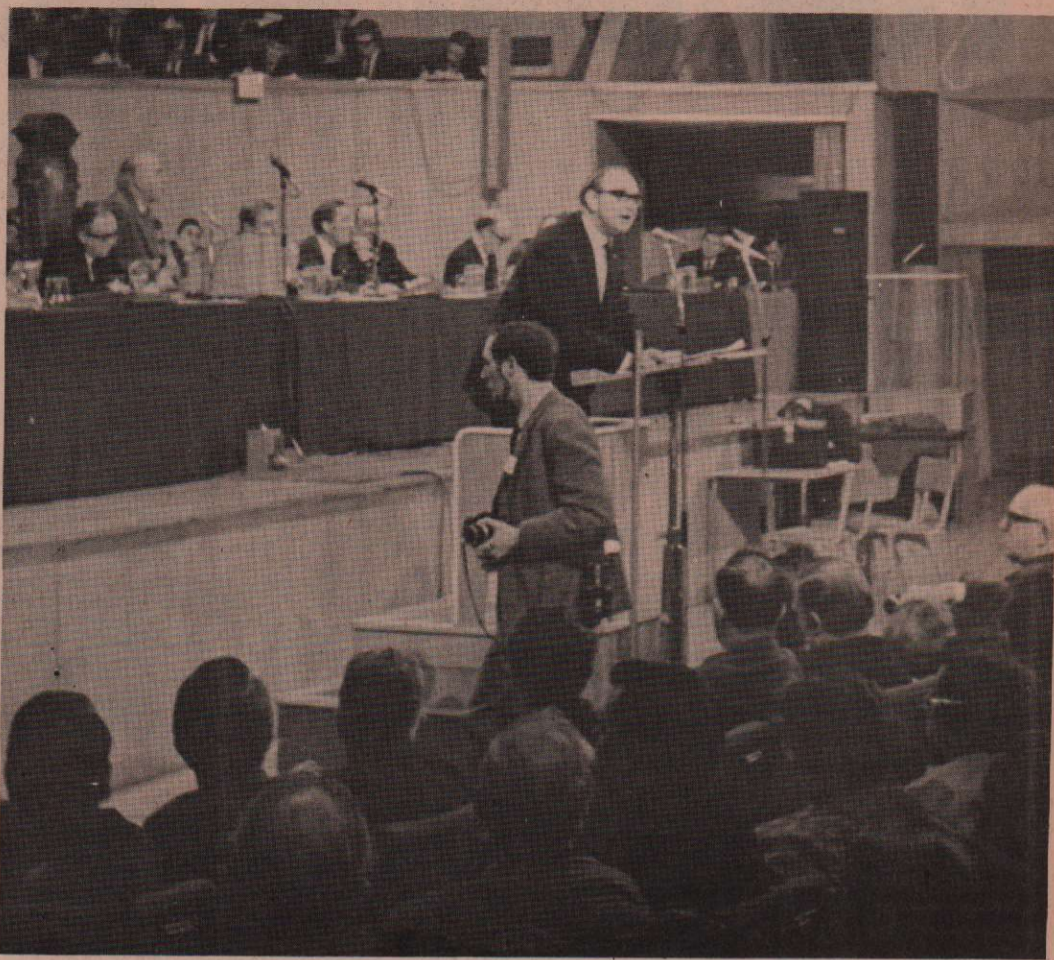
On a national level, the reappearance of another 'incomes policy' again raises doubts about the TUC's self-stated role of making capitalism a 'better' system. With different names and slight variations, workers throughout Europe face calls from trade union leaders for 'sacrifice and reason in the national interest'.

These leaders of labour play a key role in designing methods of restricting demands and persuading workers to accept restraint. Once accepted, only militant rank and file action can regain the losses so easily given away.

No doubt the TUC's Collective Bargaining Committee will set the crucial 'threshold' figures at levels just beyond the expected rate of inflation. And the intervals of wage adjustment will be rigged similarly.

The TUC's declared aim of allowing profits to rise at the workers' expense will be achieved by these methods. Any workers that attempt to win better increases will be handicapped severely by the defeatist policies of the assembled trade union leaders.

Jack Jones at the Croydon TUC: 'left' union leaders must be forced to fight any compromise with the Tories



Even if they succeed, workers will face TUC discipline as tough as Feather thinks he can get away with.

The attitude of 'left' leaders like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon will have to be watched carefully if the TUC and the government reach a deal over an incomes policy that boils down to a wage freeze. The rank and file must force them to fight such a deal.

There can be no question of giving in to pleas of 'unity' and leaving the members to fend for themselves. Full official support must be given to all workers claims and every attempt should be made to smash any deal with the government.

FOUGHT

And any proposals to give the Collective Bargaining Committee 'teeth' to discipline militants should be fought right down the line.

For years even the 'left' union leaders have signed away workers' jobs with productivity deals. The effects are being felt now as unemployment rises to its highest level for 30 years.

The only genuine defenders of the real interests of trade unionists are the rank and file themselves. Organisations that link up militants both within individual unions and on an industry-wide basis are the best methods of defence and offence: to safeguard existing conditions and to wage effective campaigns that will do more to increase wages than the promises and posturing of the official leaders.

Redundancies swell dole queues in the South West

by **SW Reporter**

THE DOLE QUEUE is growing in the South West. Light engineering firms in the Bristol area are being hit by heavy redundancies to add to the layoffs caused by the collapse of Rolls-Royce. Among firms hit are Masson-Scott Thrissell and Strachan and Henshaw.

Masson-Scott Thrissell, who make machinery for other industries, served redundancy notices without warning on 16 members of the technicians' union, ASTMS. A strike was called and was backed by members of the Engineering Union.

The men were not reinstated but some were offered jobs as 'leading hands' which means demotion and less money. They are now doing a manual job with additional supervisory responsibilities.

The lesson was learnt by Bristol printing machine manufacturers Strachan and Henshaw, a subsidiary of the Dickinson Robinson group. An AUEW steward at the plant tells the story:

'When management called the stewards together, the most we were expecting was lay-offs from the staff. In fact they told us that 140 manual workers and 60 staff were to be made redundant — more than a quarter of the work force.

'By the time we got back on to the shop floor, all the men had received a letter. Only some of them had redundancy notices in them. Given warning, we could have refused to accept the letters before they were opened.

'Most of the men started to work out their redundancy money and weren't very worried that they were out of a job. There have always been plenty of jobs in light engineering in Bristol with Rolls-Royce here. But all that's changed now

Voiced fears

There is concern about jobs in other parts of the group. Dickinson Robinson have several subsidiaries in Bristol and workers from other firms such as Robinson's Waxed Paper, Beasley French and Bailey and Wellman voiced their fears of a forthcoming 'rationalisation' at a joint-meeting called by the AUEW to discuss the lay offs.

Apart from the employers' immediate attack on costs, these lay offs are intended to soften up organised labour for a forthcoming eight-point productivity deal, complete with an incentive bonus scheme, introduction of semi-skilled labour and job evaluation.

Six of the 10 stewards have gone and the men will feel in a weak position after such massive and unfought redundancies.

There is a growing threat of unemployment in the engineering industry. Unemployment in Bristol is approaching 10,000 and still rising, with the full effects of Rolls-Royce still to come.

How can these lay offs be fought? The AUEW convenor at Strachan and Henshaw outlined the following strategy for any future redundancy situation:

'The union should rule that notice of redundancy be returned unopened. The stewards should get the number of proposed redundancies and immediately call everybody off the premises — as ASTMS did at Masson-Scott Thrissell.

'From this position of strength we can negotiate to keep the jobs:

By an overtime ban within the company or even in the whole area.

By demanding that work be brought in from other subsidiaries where they have full week's work and overtime.

And, if necessary, by going on to a four-day week to keep everybody in a job.

'Stewards' committees should be built within a company that has different branches so that solidarity action can be taken and work-sharing can be enforced within the company.

Redundancies are one way employers will cut costs in a period when profits are being squeezed. Demotions, as at Masson-Scott Thrissell, and productivity deals are other aspects of the same offensive.

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what we stand for



THE International Socialists is a democratic organisation whose membership is open to all who accept its main principles and who are willing to pay contributions and to work in one of its organisations.

We believe in independent working-class action, that we must overthrow capitalism and not tinker with reforms to patch it up.

We work in the mass organisations of the working class and are firmly committed to a policy of internationalism.

Capitalism is international. The giant firms have investments throughout the world and owe no allegiances except to themselves and the economic system they maintain.

In Europe the Common Market has been formed for the sole purpose of increasing the trade and profits of these multi-national firms.

The international power of capitalism can only be overcome by international action by the working class.

A single socialist state cannot indefinitely survive unless workers of other countries actively come to its aid by extending the socialist revolution.

In addition to building a revolutionary socialist organisation in this country we also believe in the necessity of forming a world revolutionary socialist international independent of either Washington or Moscow.

To this end we have close relationships with a number of other socialist organisations throughout the world.

We believe in rank and file control of the trade unions and the

regular election of all full-time officials.

We are firmly opposed to secret negotiations and believe that all settlements should be agreed or rejected by mass meetings.

We are for 100 per cent trade unionism and the defence of shop stewards.

We are against anti-trade union laws and any curbs on the right to strike, whether the strikes are 'official' or 'unofficial'.

We are against productivity deals and job evaluation and are for militant trade union unity and joint shop stewards committees both in the plant and on a combine basis.

We support all demands for equal pay and for a better deal for young workers.

We believe that there should be a minimum wage of at least £25 per week.

We are opposed to unemployment, redundancy and lay offs and support the demand of five days' work or five days' pay.

We support all workers in struggle and seek to build militant groups within industry.

We are opposed to racialism and police victimisation of black workers.

We are opposed to any immigration restrictions and fully support the right of black people to self-defence.

We are opposed to all nuclear weapons and military alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

We are opposed to secret diplomacy. Neither Washington nor Moscow but international socialism.

We are opposed to all forms of imperialism and unconditionally give support to and solidarity with all genuine national liberation movements.

We are for the nationalisation of the land, banks and major industries without compensation and under workers' control.

We are for the introduction of a democratic planned economy in which resources can be devoted to social need.

We are opposed to all ruling class policies and organisations. We work to build a revolutionary workers' party in Britain and to this end support the unity of all revolutionary groups.

The struggle for socialism is the central struggle of our time.

Workers' power and a world based on human solidarity, on the increasing of men's power over nature, with the abolition of the power of man over man, is certainly worth fighting for.

It is no use just talking about it. Over a century ago Karl Marx wrote: 'The philosophers have merely interpreted the world. The point is to change it'. If you want to help us change the world and build socialism, join us

THERE ARE IS BRANCHES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

SCOTLAND
Aberdeen/Clydebank/Dundee/Edinburgh/Glasgow N/Glasgow S/Stirling/Fife

NORTH EAST
Durham/Newcastle upon Tyne/Teesside (Middlesbrough and Redcar)

NORTH
Barnsley/Bradford/Derby/Doncaster/Huddersfield/Hull/Leeds/York/Selby/Sheffield

NORTH WEST
Lancaster/Manchester/Oldham/

Bolton/Merseyside/St Helens/Wigan/Potteries

MIDLANDS
Birmingham/Coventry/Northampton/Leicester/Oxford/Nottingham

WALES and SOUTH WEST
Bath/Bristol/Cardiff/Exeter/Swansea/Plymouth

SOUTH
Ashford/Brighton/Crawley/Folkestone/Portsmouth/Southampton

EAST
Cambridge/Harlow/Ipswich/Lowestoft/Norwich/Colchester

GREATER LONDON and HOME COUNTIES
Acton/Angel/Bletchley/Camden/Chertsey/Croydon/Dagenham/Enfield/Erith/Fulham/Greenford/Harrow/Hemel Hempstead/Hornsey/Ilford/Kilburn/Kingston/Lambeth/Lewisham/Merton/Newham/Reading/Richmond/Stoke Newington/Slough/South Ealing/Tottenham/Walthamstow/Wandsworth/Watford/Victoria

Like William Turner of Birmingham

Workers at two small Birmingham factories have been fighting a desperate battle for three months. In spite of weeks of hardship, police harassment and little help from their local union official, they are struggling for simple, basic and elementary rights: to belong to a union and to be recognised as trade unionists.

Neither of the disputes has captured the national headlines as have the post or Ford strikes. Yet both of them expose not only the plight and exploitation of thousands of workers employed in similar small factories but also how Britain's second biggest trade union apparently is incapable of defeating two family businessmen.

On 5 January 18 members of the engineering union, the AUEW, stopped work at Daytona Engineering. A week later 40 more AUEW workers began their strike at the grim, crowded back-street firm of Auto Tools. Appalling conditions exist in both factories.

At Auto Tools, wages are staggeringly low. A miller gets £14 for 40 hours and assemblers only 30p an hour. The firm refuses to pay any basic hourly rates with the result that, if a machine breaks down or work is not available, not a single penny, new or old, is paid for the time involved.

Workers fined

In addition to reluctantly paying wages, the owner of the firm, a Mr William Edwin Homer, devised a cunning scheme for getting some of it back. Under his factory rules, workers who are late, absent or allegedly responsible for poor workmanship had fines of 50p imposed upon them.

One example of this occurred at the beginning of the year. A worker missed a morning's work because his pregnant wife felt unwell. For this 'crime' he lost half a day's pay and was fined 50p as a punishment.

Many of the workers at the company had been with the firm only a few months before the strike. They told me of many reasons why they decided to join a union and seek recognition.

John Byrne, the 29 years-old shop steward, explained that conditions were hard and that some of the machines were unsafe.

Shirley Duerden, a capstan operator, said that at Christmas she had been given £8 holiday money. But when she returned to work, she found it had been deducted from her next pay packet.

Another worker described how four foremen patrolled the factory telling everyone that 'if they didn't like it they could get out'.

Daytona Engineering is situated opposite the giant British Leyland plant of Pressed Steel Fisher in Erdington. It manufactures butterfly valves for such well known companies as ICI and British Oxygen.

Daytona is owned by Mr William Turner and his relatives. Four of them are employed at the factory.

The wage rates are higher than at Auto Tools but well below the district average.

There is only one toilet for all the shop floor workers and the drain from it is connected to the washroom/tea room drain. This is unsanitary and potentially harmful to health.

The lighting in the workshops is inadequate and safety guards are missing from many of the machines.

It was in an effort to improve their pay and conditions that the workers at these factories joined the AUEW and demanded the right of recognition. It was in an effort to preserve the conditions that both bosses emphatically refused it.

Ever since the strikes began, the workers have suffered from police harassment. Pickets have been on duty every day since January.

On 12 February five policemen arrived at Auto Tools to tell 13 pickets, three of them women, that they were acting illegally. According to one policeman, only four pickets were allowed and he ordered all the others to leave.

Arrested

They refused. The police sent for reinforcements and minutes later between 30 and 40 of them arrived in two panda cars and two vans. They arrested six pickets for obstruction.

A seventh, 19 years-old Noel Allen, went to a local pub, the Hen and Chickens, to make a telephone call. While he was waiting to use the phone, two policemen entered the pub hallway and grabbed him.

The seven pickets were taken to a local police station and kept there for five hours. Four of those arrested were

The Daytona boss: no company figures

shop stewards from the Lucas starter and dynamo factory who had joined the picket in solidarity. One of them told me that, in his view, the conduct of the police had been 'thoroughly disgraceful'.

The pickets have since appeared in court three times from the day of their arrest and still no evidence has been offered by the police. Many of the strikers fear a frame-up trial.

Police harassment at Auto Tools has been a daily occurrence and the strikers have been insulted continually.

The police have also been very active at Daytona. Police visits to the picket line have again been daily and on one occasion three pickets were taken to the local station for questioning.

No arrests have been made although Mr Turner has accused the pickets of unproven and unseen acts of violence.

The only illegal act which can be proved in connection with Daytona concerns the conduct of the company itself. According to the 1967 Companies Act, annual statements of returns and accounts must be sent to the Registrar of Companies.

This has not been done since 1968 either for Daytona Engineering or another company owned by Turner known as Erdington Stockholders Ltd. An official public complaint was made on 22 March regarding this unlawful act.

Needless to say, the local police have not made daily visits to Mr Turner

nor charged him for an offensive weapon that he claims is for against the strikers under capitalism.

No annual report Auto Tools as it is pany. There is no Daytona Engineering breaking the law for Erdington Stock published.

Der

These show that 1967 profits were in 1968.

But the three members of the Turner £394 as their fees in 1968. Because its were so low for taxation.

Erdington Stock compared to Daytona now calls itself.

In addition to and arrests, the way to deal with the Department. They have Security benefits. Health office of sent five workers to

Only one of the picket line and he one of the strikers.



The Daytona picket line: fighting on against police attacks

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Name

Address

Send to: IS, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

GOVERNMENT AND BOSSES IGNORE THE SCANDAL OF THE LOW PAID

PLIGHT OF BRITAIN'S



The dustmen: their strike helped expose the scandal of the lowly paid

WORKING POOR

by VALERIE CLARK

Almost a quarter of a million men in full-time employment earn less for a week's work than they would get if they were on Social Security. This means — with wives and children — that more than a million people, with the family breadwinner in regular work, live in poverty.

The 'poverty line' is the one laid down by the Supplementary Benefits Commission in its basic scale rates paid to the poor. These figures appeared in *The Times* last month.

18 months ago other researchers were even more pessimistic. 'In September 1968 nearly one adult man in six (16 per cent) received a poverty wage for a full week's work. By this we mean less than £17 gross.' (A Sinfield and F Twine, University of Essex.)

Serious

The most recent estimates show an enormous increase in the number of people in poverty. Much is written about pensioners and the unemployed, but the scandal of the millions of WORKING poor is conveniently overlooked.

The problem of low pay in Britain is far more serious than the government and employers would have us believe. The national press readily quotes the 'huge' sums earned by the average car worker, and the fact that the average manual wage is more than £26 per week.

They are not quite so ready to point out that these 'average' wages are often for a 56 hour week. If you take a 40 hour week as a basis, a third of male manual workers would earn less than £16 per week.

One million adult men in full-time work earn less than £15 per week. Another two million earn less than £17. Some rates are as low as £9 per week.

More than a million adult fully employed women earn less than £10 per week. Many get less, rates being as low as £7.

People tend to dismiss the female group as 'not being breadwinners'. But consider how many of these women are widows alone, younger women supporting children, or single women with dependent parents. It is no longer mere 'feminism' to demand a decent wage for women workers too.

For an advanced industrialised country, Britain has extremely low BASIC wage rates. We also work

longer hours and have fewer holidays than many other European countries.

Groups of low paid workers are found in all industries, including those such as printing and car production that are considered highly paid.

In fact the high wages averaged in these industries are due not so much to high rates but to excessive amounts of overtime, bonus or productivity payments and shift work allowances.

The worker who has little opportunity to earn these 'extra' payments due to weak health, age, lack of skill or the nature of his job, finds that his take-home pay — the basic wage — is pitifully inadequate.

Who are the low-paid workers? Although there are millions of them in our midst, they have been ignored for years. They are clerks and shop assistants, factory workers and public employees.

Looking at the pattern of wage rises over the last few years, it is clear that the gains have been made by workers bargaining through their shop stewards at factory level.

The low paid workers have been handicapped by their tendency to be in nationalised industries, local government, and other trades covered by national agreements. The low-paid are learning from the example of their more sophisticated colleagues and they have been growing more militant.

But it is too easy to say simply that more trade union organisation is needed. Many poorly-paid workers have been trade unionists for years.

Reluctant

Unfortunately, too often they are in industries that are not of key importance to the economy and where their bargaining power is weak. Others are in jobs, like teaching and nursing, where they are naturally reluctant to use the strike weapon.

But some sections are fighting back. The council workers were a fine example.

Remember their modest demand? An increase to bring them up to a flat basic wage of £16.50 per week.

Many of them were taking home as little as £9 and £13.50 was the average for a 40 hour week.

The postal workers too are very poorly paid, only making a living wage by regular, often excessive, overtime.

Thousands more who tend to get forgotten are the agricultural workers. With a basic wage of less than £15, obliged to work a seven-day week at certain seasons in appalling conditions, these men are among the most oppressed.

Although the tied cottage is no longer the legal threat it once was, in practice many a farm worker is

still afraid to complain for fear of his family being evicted.

The 'idyllic' country life is far from reality for these people. Apart from milk and eggs, most foodstuffs cost more in the small village shop than in the large city supermarket.

And the picturesque cottage is usually damp and draughty, a bathroom or indoor lavatory almost unknown.

Whether in town or country, whatever the job, the life of the poor is similar. Grey, cheerless. Cramped, badly-furnished rooms, and a diet of bread and jam, chips and tea.

Abolished

Mothers used to rely heavily on school milk for the children, but that has gone now. Labour abolished it in secondary schools, and the Tories finished the job by doing away with it in primary schools.

Contrary to the myths of the popular press, research shows that these families spend less than average on cigarettes, alcohol and betting. Neither are they all large families — most have only two or three children.

They are bitter about the loss of pride and self-respect when forced to ask for assistance. One man complained: 'I've forfeited my life by answering so many questions. All my life is on paper at the National Assistance'.

For parents there is a terrible sense of failing the children, buying their clothes in jumble sales, making excuses at Christmas, refusing money for sweets and school outings.

There is the unenviable choice between the children going without dinner or taking a husband's pathetic wage slips for inspection to enable the children to get free dinners.

Of course, in theory, the Welfare State provides free benefits for the family of the low wage earner. But Socialist Worker has pointed out con-

tinually how reluctant the old or sick are to undergo means tests for benefit, and how much more reluctant is the working man.

Understandably, he feels deeply when, after a week's work, he is still expected to go 'begging' for free medicine or school milk for his children.

When designing their grand welfare schemes, the government depends on the knowledge that a good half of those eligible either will never find out about the benefits or refuse to participate in the necessary means test.

The worries, dangers and degradation are the same for all who live in poverty. But as one woman explained: 'In a way, it's worse for us. I'm NOT a widow, or a pensioner. My husband is NOT unemployed.'

'He works hard. We ought to be living properly. We have the TV but that's all.'

'We hardly ever buy new clothes or go to the pictures. My husband would like to go out with his mates, but how do you think a working man feels when he can't even go to the pub because he hasn't got the price of a pint?'

Greedy

The prospect looks bleak. Whether Labour or Tory, every government is prepared to trample over the weak in its frantic search to find ways to pay for its own mistakes. The greedy and exploitative employer is always with us.

In the short term, we can demand free welfare services, available to all — without the means test. We can ask that the stronger workers support their lower-paid colleagues.

Capitalism is not kind and generous. It is a system that forces some to live in squalor and hunger so that others may live in luxury.

And that system must be fought. This is not just another slogan.

If we are serious about abolishing poverty, we have no alternative but to tackle the system that breeds it.

VITAL READING FOR
ALL TRADE UNIONISTS

The Employers' Offensive

productivity deals and how to fight them
by TONY CLIFF

7s a copy including post
IS BOOKS 6 Cottons Gardens London E2 8DN

and an offensive weapon.

publicly carrying
a pitchfork —
his 'self-defence'
Such is justice

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The first 'blacking' list, for Auto Tools was not sent out until 1 March and for Daytona not until a day later.

The local union district secretary, Mr Norman Cartwright, has hardly been seen by the strikers and he has not been to the Auto Tools picket line for a month. Workers from both factories are very bitter about his lack of support and to date only two mass pickets have been held at Daytona and none at Auto Tools.

One worker said that he could not understand how a union like the AUEW could possibly fail to crush both of these small firms. There is no doubt that much of the responsibility for this failure lies with Mr Cartwright.

The Industrial Relations Bill will make it much harder for workers at these kind of small factories to win decent pay and better conditions. The only way that they can be assisted is if other trade unionists come to their assistance and help them to victory.

This must be done urgently. Every Birmingham AUEW member should come quickly to the assistance of the strikers.

No shameful defeat should be allowed. Money is desperately needed. Please send cash to:

Auto Tools Strike Committee, 8 Brighton Road, Birmingham 12.
Daytona Strike Committee, 140 Dyas Road, Great Barr, Birmingham 22A.

BBC television's series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and *Elizabeth R* (now being re-run on Saturdays on BBC2) have aroused considerable interest in this important period of English history. But whatever the artistic merits of the productions, they are a travesty of history and in no way reflect the vital social developments of the time that helped mould the policies of the Tudor dynasty.

What really happened in Tudor England



TOP: A ship of the East India Company leaving for the East. The company was one of the first to be founded in Tudor times



RIGHT: Elizabeth's ambassador to India helped the East India Company to open up trading links with the continent

What do you know about Tudor England? That Henry VIII was a much-married glutton who chopped off his ex-wives' heads? And that his daughter Elizabeth defeated the Spanish Armada and remained a virgin all her life in spite of several unconfirmed love affairs?

That is one way of looking at history. It is the way most people are encouraged to look, for it confirms the attitude that history is made by a romantic and adventurous few and that the great mass of ordinary people have no part to play in that process. But real history is different to that. Although key individuals can play vital roles at certain times — and Henry and Elizabeth were important to their period — society moves forward, progresses or stagnates for reasons rooted in the economic structure of the time and the powerful and opposing class forces

The long period of the Tudor monarchy — from 1485 to 1603 — was a vital one in the development of English society. It saw the decline of the old feudal system and the growth of trade and a strong merchant class that prepared the ground for the modern system of capitalism.

In the 15th century England emerged as a manufacturer of cloth, a trend that started in East Anglia. Because of the poor quality of East Anglian wool there was little demand for it abroad, while other parts of England had a substantial stake in wool exporting.

Compete

East Anglian wool was used instead to produce cloth for local use. Immigrant craftsmen from Flanders, a leading area for cloth manufacture, raised the standard of the East Anglian product until villages such as Worsted became famous for the quality of their cloth and began to compete with and finally outstrip their Flemish competitors.

The cloth industry grew along capitalist lines: Small weavers were dominated by the merchants who had the financial power to exploit the European market.

The clothier quickly dominated every sector of the industry: he

First of two articles by DAVID EAST



Elizabeth I

bought the raw wool, gave it to the spinners, — women and children working in their cottages — and handed it on to the weavers, dyers and shear-men.

Instead of selling and buying back the product at each stage of its manufacture, the clothier paid for each process at fixed piece rates. Profits were high and the accumulated capit-

al allowed the industry to spread to Somerset, Yorkshire and other parts.

The clothiers began to merge into the beginnings of a capitalist class — rich, unscrupulous and daring, willing to risk exploring fresh markets. Commercial centres developed in London, Bristol and Hull where the wealthy merchants became as important and influential as the feudal nobles.

The growth of the cloth industry enabled the clothiers to concentrate production under one roof, where weavers, dyers, fullers and shear-men could work in a comparatively streamlined way with harsh discipline and bad conditions. It was the forerunner of the factory system.

Two other important factors help paint the economic backdrop to the period. The first is the 'discoveries', naval adventurers opening up new continents and returning home with vast amounts of stolen booty.

The demand for silver and gold in the 15th century outstripped the supply and sparked off a serious monetary crisis throughout Europe. Precious metal was vital to the development of trade and its shortage prompted the search for new sources and with it a resulting extension of the world market.

As every schoolchild knows, 'in 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' He was followed by Vasco da Gama and later by intrepid English 'sea dogs' like Drake and Hawkins.

Their reasons were not purely adventurous, neither were their backers: they sought new mining areas and bullion to swell the treasure chests at home and allow the merchant class to trade and profit more effectively.

Gold and silver bullion streamed into Europe from the Americas. The new trade routes were guarded jealously by each nation and enormous strides were taken in designing modern ships suitable for trade and defence.

Owners of capital invested in new industries: in England cloth was supplemented by soap manufacture, brewing, shipbuilding, glass, gunpow-

der, saltpetre, and sugar. Much of this manufacture was carried out in factory conditions and required coal in considerable quantities, leading to the rapid growth of the mining industry.

This small 'industrial revolution' of 1540 to 1640 enabled England to become a great trading nation. It strengthened the power of the middle class of merchants and capitalists and prepared them for their struggle for power in the 17th century.

The second factor concerns the land. A free market in land and labour was vital to the development of capitalism and the 'enclosure movement', that fenced off common land, and put it under the control of rich farmers and dispossessed the peasantry, was a vital step in this direction.

The enclosure movement had been going on since the 14th century but its effects were most widely felt in the Tudor period because of rising population — up to about five million — and rising prices brought about by the influx of precious metals into England that sent profits and prices soaring and almost halved the value of real wages.

Misery

Land values soared, too, and encouraged farmers and capitalists to grab a bigger stake in the country. The 'Merrie England' of the day was in reality a time of abject misery for the labouring masses, forced into poverty by inflation, robbed of their land and their sheep.

The enclosure movement produced an army of unemployed, swollen at stages by the breaking up of the nobles' private armies by Henry VII and the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

Slowly, the unemployed were absorbed into the growing capitalist industries but it was a slow process

and generations of landless peasants, redundant retainers and evicted monks literally starved.

It was what the rising capitalist class needed — in Karl Marx's description, 'a degraded and servile condition of the mass of the people, the transformation of them into mercenaries and of their means of labour into capital!'

Savagely repressive laws were passed against the unemployed. 'Sturdy vagabonds' had their ears cut off and those who 'refused' to work were made the slaves of their accusers. Unlicensed beggars of 14 or more were flogged and branded and executed for a third 'offence'.

But as the unemployed were sucked into industry, the towns grew and demands for bread and meat led to the growth of arable farming and, ironically, a demand for more agricultural labourers.

The jobless were sent to work on the land and wages were fixed by local Justices of the Peace, wealthy farmers and capitalists to a man, who naturally saw that wages were kept as low as possible. The Poor Law of 1601 apprenticed children of paupers and set in train the system of workhouse and poor rate that existed until the Industrial Revolution.

And so the scene is set: Tudor England witnessed fundamental changes, new classes of capitalists and workers began to develop within the feudal system, a world market for manufactured goods appeared and these goods were paid for in money not in kind. Powerful trading companies owned by merchants were set up to exploit those markets and defend them with fleets of modern ships.

Such changes called forth a new kind of state machine, new politics, new religion — and a new monarchy.

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NEXT WEEK: rise of the new class—with God on their side

NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN! NOW THEN!



Search of the lonely wanderer

FOR MANY PEOPLE, the undoubted stars of *Easy Rider* were neither Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper nor even the motorbikes. All of them were dwarfed by the superb performance of a little-known actor, Jack Nicholson.

Nicholson played the role of a drunken, radical Southern lawyer with such freshness and direct appeal that he won himself an Oscar as the best supporting actor of the year.

As if to prove that this was no flash in the pan, he now appears as the main character in a new film of his own, *Five Easy Pieces*. Nicholson plays a rootless, discontented, misunderstood drifter.

His family are musical and intellectual and he can feel for them little but contempt and incomprehension. To escape from their deadening influence, he embarks upon a series of manual jobs in a prolonged attempt to make some sense out of the lunatic world around him.

Destroys illusions

Five Easy Pieces rejects any simple romanticism or self-pity. Nicholson brutally destroys his brother's girlfriend's romantic illusions about music and then seduces her. He frequently humiliates his dumb sexy girl friend and despises his own need for her.

Yet, strangely, the film is full of compassion. Through the medium of this lonely, wry individual, the director has managed to reflect an America that has lost its sense of purpose.

An ironic eye is cast upon consumer plenty, upon middle-class pretentiousness and even, in passing, upon the amazing pomposity of some radicals (represented here by a shapeless, aggressive young girl who is morbidly obsessed with cleanliness and with the unpardonable dirtiness of capitalist society).

Five Easy Pieces illustrates the never very absent appeal for many Americans of the drifting wanderer who has no ties and no commitments. Less and less in evidence in an age of technological sophistication, the roving itinerant worker still holds a tremendous attraction for many people.

Brave and forlorn

Yet, in the end our 'hero' is seen as tragic rather than exciting, and lonely rather than happy. To escape from the clutches of his demanding girl friend, he hitches a ride to Alaska with only the clothes on his back as luggage. And so the film leaves him - venturing into an unknown tomorrow - brave and forlorn but always facing the world with a wry, unshakeable smile on his face.

It is this quality of conscious irony in Nicholson's performance that lifts *Five Easy Pieces* to great heights. He cajoles, pleads, demands and finally forces the viewer to observe the insights of character he is revealing.

It is a performance of remarkable power and is if anything more convincing than his acting in *Easy Rider*. *Five Easy Pieces* is a film of rare sympathy and tenderness. It is a pleasure to watch.

Martin Tomkinson

SO YOU SEE THERE IS NOTHING IN MY BUDGET TO HURT THE WORKERS - EXCEPT PERHAPS THE NEW AIR TAX



COTTONS COLUMN

MRS JILL KNIGHT, the Tory MP for Edgbaston, is a member of the House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. Would you expect that a person chosen for such a committee would be reasonably tolerant, a liberal who studiously avoided the language of the racist and the Powellite?

You would be wrong. Listen to the *Edgbaston News*, the paper of the local Tory Party. It reports that the Select Committee visited Birmingham recently and Mrs Knight says that she spoke to an immigrant woman in Winson Green who had eight children, no bathroom, no hot water, no indoor sanitation, no heat except from paraffin heaters and an out-of-work husband.

Here are problems crying out for action - against slum landlords, slovenly councils and welfare officers. But Mrs Knight has other priorities.

'In such cases,' she says, 'I believe we must follow a policy of explaining to women with large families that sterilisation is available and exactly what it means.'

We would look forward, with some trepidation, to the recommendations of the Select Committee.

BUT NEVER let it be said that Mrs Knight does not have a sense of humour. Writing in the Edgbaston News on the Industrial Relations Bill, she notes that, during a crucial debate, some Labour MPs sang The Red Flag.

She comments: 'Normally these members hide their Communism ... But being MPs they have power and



MRS KNIGHT: sterile talk

they work as hard as they can (albeit most covertly) to further the Red cause in Britain.'

'Make no mistake about it,' she trumpets. 'The fight on the Industrial Relations Bill is basically a battle between Communism and Democracy.'

Could it be that the government Chief Whip is not the only Tory MP who sees things through a pink (gin) haze?

Double value

MORE ABOUT Sir Keith Joseph's Commission to investigate all these 'scroungers' who rob the tax-payer by living off the Welfare State.

Funny how sometimes it's clever to fiddle the Exchequer and other times it's a mortal sin. If you've got a good accountant and you manage to dodge tax on your firm's profits or your £20,000 a year salary, everyone congratulates you on being a shrewd businessman.

If you try to get an extra quid for a pair of kid's shoes out of the National Assistance, you're considered

to be ruining the British economy. Look at the amounts involved in frauds recovered by government prosecutions for 1969:

Under-assessment of profits - £13,230,101.

Recovery of overpayment of benefit - £816,000 (0.18 per cent of total benefits paid out - negligible).

WORKERS PRESS, the prolier-than-thou paper of the Socialist Labour League, has just finished yet another 'expose' of the bankrupt, perfidious politics of the International Socialists, well-known revisionists, agents of the employers and Stalinists, and so on and so on.

*The day after the series ended, the paper reprinted a fascinating and lucid account of the history of the Ford Motor Company, reprinted from The Newsletter in 1963 (the forerunner of Workers Press). Someone should tell the editors that the article was written by R*g*r P*o*z, now editor of a certain revisionist, counter-revolutionary paper.*

St Pancras prang

HOW ungrateful our feathered friends are. A large notice - clearly written with great feeling - at London's St Pancras Station says: 'Please do not feed the pigeons. It only encourages them - AS MANY PASSENGERS KNOW TO THEIR DISCOMFORT.'

A combination of Sid Greene and a few St Pancras pigeons might prove too much for British Rail bosses in the present wage talks.



THE TELLY COPPERS have gone away for their summer hols. Poor old Dixon has been carried off to the geriatric ward and Charlie Barlow can spend six months having his galloping schizophrenia sorted out.

BBC2's *The Expert* came to an abrupt halt on Sunday with Professor Hardy's doctor wife at death's door after a mad kidnapper had filled her full of gunshot. We will have to wait until the autumn to see if she survives, but the Prof wasn't worried: he often seems to prefer dead bodies to the human kind.

Why the enormous output of police dramas on the box? It would be absurd to dismiss it as a conspiracy to show how marvellous the hobnail brigade really are, although the bevy of official police advisers to series such as *The Expert*, *Softly, Softly* and *Z Cars* not only give the programmes verisimilitude (I've always wanted to use that word) but, politically speaking, keep them on the straight and narrow.

Techniques

I imagine the real reason is that writers of weekly series find more drama and clashes of personality in the battle between cops and robbers than in most other situations and, helped by Scotland Yard, can pad out the stories with masses of detail about new techniques.

The danger, of course, is that police methods can come to dominate the plays. *Z Cars* set out as an attempt to portray gritty Merseyside life in the raw with no real effort to moralise or take sides.

But its later development into *Softly, Softly* was matched by a fussy concern with new methods. Criminals have tended of late to be rather cardboard and predictable and some of the individual plays have been ludicrous distortions about the actual role of the law.

Overblown

The Expert (which usually gets a BBC1 summer re-run, so you may get to see the latest series if you haven't got BBC2) is different to the usual run-of-the-nick stuff. The main character, Professor Hardy, is a criminal pathologist, not a detective and the main interest of the series is to see each week how he unravels a crime by the use of science.

He has a more hate than love relationship with the local police chief, Inspector Fleming who is probably closer to the real thing than some of the overblown prima donnas on the main channel. On Sunday, Fleming thumped hell out of the kidnapper who shot Hardy's wife, an act not seen before, I feel, on British television.

Again, we will have to wait for the next series to see if Fleming gets the bounce. My money is on Dr Hardy recovering and Fleming getting a severe reprimand.

Dour

CLASSIC SERIALS are coming thick and fast on BBC2. *Jude the Obscure* was hardly cold in the grave when *Sunset Song* started last Friday.

It is based on a book by a relatively unknown Scottish writer, Lewis Grassie Gibbon and tells the story of a farming family struggling to survive in a bleak area of Scotland at the turn of the century. The central character is the young daughter of the tough, puritanical, God-fearing farmer and her slow awakening into womanhood.

The first instalment was pretty dour going, but it might pick up.

David East

Socialist Worker

Barber Budget pleases bosses

SHARES ROSE, the City was jubilant, the CBI was pleased: clearly Barber's Budget was in the interests of the rich. Basically, this is what it means for the majority of working people:

1. 780,000 workers will remain on the dole. The Budget will lead to no new jobs for the unemployed.
2. In the period before the new pension increase takes effect, the cost of living will rise by an expected 20 per cent. The average pensioners will still be 5 per cent worse off in relative

3. The average wage earner will receive £45 a year in tax reductions. BUT he will pay out significantly more than this in higher National Insurance contributions, welfare charges, school milk and meals, medical and dental fees and rents.
4. Arnold Weinstock, Lord Stokes, and David Barran of Shell, along with other top industrialists, will get back each week between £40 and £70 cuts in surtax.
5. Children of the rich will have a big-

- ger part of their 'public' school fees paid by working-class taxpayers.
6. Allowing husbands and wives to be assessed separately for income tax will favour only those women in the higher income groups.
7. Get-rich-quick Stock Exchange sharks will now pay only half as much capital gains tax.
8. Big business is handed up to another £400 millions a year through cuts in corporation tax and selective employment tax.

New threat to worker's families

From page one

cut the family's benefit if the husband is on strike.

Sir Keith Joseph, Tory Minister for Social Services, said he was prompted to do this since 'the public was offended at paying strikers'.

When the miners were on strike the rest of us were the public. When the power workers were on strike the rest of us, including the miners, were the public.

The same with the postal workers. The same with Ford workers.

The 'public' is the working class.

Essential

These are the real issues at stake:-

● With the spread of productivity deals, nervous strain and tension increases tremendously. It becomes essential for a number of short rests to keep body and soul together. The Tories oppose the right to rest.

● In February 12,000 more people lost their jobs. With the Rolls-Royce and Vehicle & General collapse, with the newspaper and steel industry undergoing massive redundancies, it will be more like 20,000 in March. Yet legislation penalises employees for the results of the private ownership of industry.

● In Liverpool in 1969 workers continued a strike to refuse to accept the employers' subs in preference for non-repayable supplementary benefit. During the postal workers' strike the Tories made the Post Office pay unreceived backpay to disqualify post workers from receiving an adequate benefit. The defeat of the postworkers is now being generalised to all workers.

Menace

The aim to estrange husband and wife 'saves' £1¼ million. This dismal sum has nothing to do with stopping inflation.

With the Budget proposals for Value Added Tax it is quite clear that to the rich and tiny minority in this country, inflation is no problem, but workers who go on strike are the greatest menace. The massive strike wave in recent months has spread the lessons of solidarity.

Before the mid-1960s it was largely irrelevant what the politicians got up to. Since then parliamentary government has become a danger to the lives of ordinary people.

We can't afford to sit around and wait four years for another government to come along to break yet another set of promises.

It is now absolutely vital for rank and file opposition to grow in Councils of Action, and for militants to group together and organise a political, revolutionary alternative to the rule of the bosses.

Next week: how to break the new Tory law

'WE ARE STAYING OUT' - NO CRACKS IN FORD STRIKE

by Colin Beadle, Dagenham Body Plant, TGWU

THE MESSAGE from Ford workers last Sunday was loud and clear: There will be no return. There is no weakening. There are no splits.

About 3500 strikers from the Basildon, Aveley and Dunton plants gave a near unanimous vote of confidence in their unions' position when Moss Evans, chairman of the union side of the Ford negotiating committee, gave a run down on the present state of the strike. Workers at Ford's Croydon depot also voted solidly to stay out.

The Basildon result is of special significance as the plant has not been renowned for its militancy in the past. It is one more example of the nationwide unity of the 50,000 strikers who have been out now for nine weeks.

We are confronted by the worldwide resources of the Ford Motor Company, aided and abetted by their local allies, the Tory government. The Tories desperately want to defeat our strike as an example to all those who are fighting for a better standard of living.

UNDERMINE

The vindictive proposals to slash social security benefit to families of strikers is just one more attempt to undermine any attempts by working people to defend themselves. The sooner we get rid of the Tory government the better.

The Ford Motor Company's worldwide size, with its power reaching into nearly every country must, if we are to win this and other strikes, be opposed by international trade union strategy.

A step towards such a policy was taken last week. Representatives of car workers' unions throughout the world met in London to discuss common problems.

Financial assistance, if called for by our unions, was pledged by the delegates. Leonard Woodcock, President of the American United Auto Workers' Union, described the present strike as part of the same struggle as American Ford workers have to face.

The British unions' case is to be published in Germany for distribution to Ford workers there who have also pledged financial support if required.

ESSENTIAL

Many Ford workers, especially the single ones, are now really feeling the pinch.

It is essential that the strike is won. Other workers can not afford to stand by and allow us to go the way of the postmen and the power workers.

Make no mistake - this strike is YOUR strike. Financial appeals have been sent out to trade union branches throughout Britain.

Ford strikers at Dagenham donated £1000 to the postmen's hardship funds out of their own strike pay. At Dagenham, already, financial assistance has been received from postmen, among others.

Ford, the press and the government have tried everything to break the strike. We can win provided we are not starved out.

Donations to Ford Shop Steward Committee, 286 New Rd, Dagenham, Essex.

Pay deadlock for DATA is warning for engineers

PROFITS rose by 14 per cent in the engineering industry last year, but the employers have flatly refused to offer a decent rise to 70,000 draughtsmen and technicians.

The bosses' offer this week of slightly improved minimum rates would give only an average rise of 2 per cent, according to DATA, the draughtsmen's and technicians' section of the AUEW. The reason is that great majority of DATA members are earning more than the new proposed minimum rates.

The union has rejected the employers' offer and announced that it will fight for its claim of £5 a week by individual plant bargaining, backed by militant action.

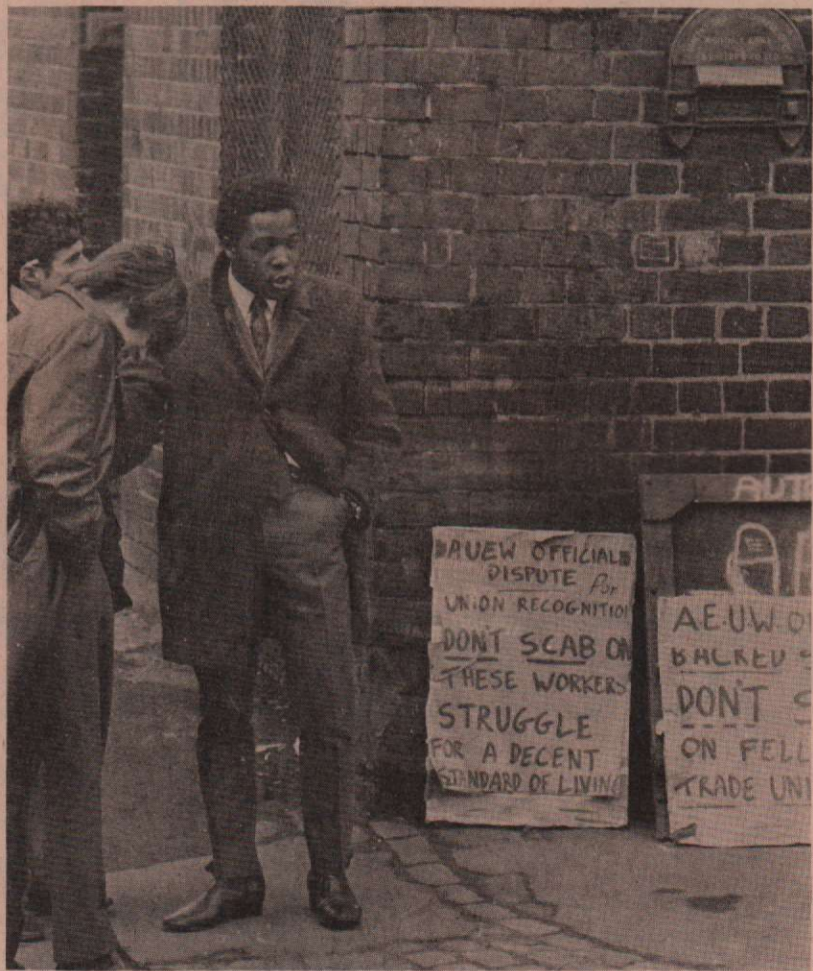
Stiff resistance

The employers' attitude is another example of the government's determination to hold down wages and actually force through a cut in workers' standards. It is also a grim warning to the 3½ million manual engineering workers that their forthcoming claim will meet with stiff resistance.

The National Committee of the AUEW meets in June and motions for debate will demand a 60 per cent rise and big improvement in the industry's present basic rate.

These are disgracefully low: £19 for a skilled man, £15 for an unskilled man and £13 for women. The present three-year agreement runs out in December and there is no doubt that the employers, backed by the Tories' anti-union laws, will refuse to offer an acceptable increase.

This means the proposed DATA strikes will be of crucial importance to the whole engineering industry. Now that DATA is part of the amalgamated engineering union they must be backed by the full might of the industry's workers.



Pickets seen this week at Auto Tools, Birmingham. Workers have been on strike since January for union recognition. Story page 4

'LEFT' POWER UNIONS HELP WAGES DEFEAT

by Colin Barker

THE ELECTRICITY supply dispute ended last week with an apparent 'victory' for the unions. The electricity bosses dropped proposals for compulsory redundancies in the industry this year - for those workers who agree to co-operate with their productivity schemes.

But this is really no victory. The employers aim is to reduce the labour force, but they can manage this quite well with 'natural wastage'.

As one local power station superintendent remarked: 'Compulsory redundancies were a red herring'.

The unions fought to get the bosses to drop a clause they didn't need. The result is a disaster for the rank and file.

The unions' demand was for £5.80 but the workers got only £2. In addition they have 'lead-in' payments to be paid out in June, October and January.

These amount to financial blackmail for workers to sign documents accepting redundancy and productivity schemes.

The unions' role has been disgraceful. The General and Municipal and the Elec-

tricians between them have a majority on the negotiating panel and their support for the agreement will surprise nobody.

But what of the 'left' Engineers and Transport Workers? Their officials claim that 'their hands are tied' because they are in a minority. And they claim also that they cannot withdraw from the national negotiations because of the Electricity Act.

What nonsense! If the AUEW and TGWU can argue for non-co-operation with the Industrial Relations Bill, why shouldn't they force the electricity employers to negotiate with them separately? The fact is that the 'left' AUEW and TGWU officials are using the situation as an excuse for their weakness.

AUEW members in the power industry are re-reading the words printed on their union cards: 'Members are requested to use every exertion to obtain work for the unemployed and so lighten the burden on all'.

In a week when the AUEW negotiators have sold thousands of jobs, these words make bitter reading.

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EMERGENCY RULE in Ceylon. Public meeting Friday 2 April, University of London Union, 7.15pm. Speakers R Mendis and A Bandara. Organised by Revolutionary Action Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Ceylon.

PRINTWORKER readers' meeting: small Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, Thur 8 April 7.45pm.

MANCHESTER Council of Action public meeting: Bernadette Devlin MP on Defend the Unions, Houldsworth Hall, Deansgate, Thur 22 April, 7.30pm.

WANDSWORTH IS public meeting, Nigel Harris on The Budget and prospects for the British economy. Spotted Dog, 72 Garrett Lane, nr Wandsworth Town Hall. Thur 8 April, 8pm.

HOW TO FIGHT THE TORIES: Bernadette Devlin MP and Roger Rosewell. Digbeth Civic Hall. Wednesday 7 April 8pm.

WEST LONDON IS region day school at St Matthews Church Hall, North Common Road, Sunday 4 April, 11.30am to 5pm on History of British Labour Movement: Chartists, Rise of Shop Stewards Movement and Perspectives.

Published by the International Socialists, 6 Cottons Gdns London E2. Printed by SW (Litho) Printers Ltd [TU all depts]. Registered with the Post Office.