

Socialist Worker

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

DOCKERS LEAD FIGHT FOR JOBS



Printers and dockers picketing



Backing for printers

LONDON dockers are not restricting the fight for jobs to their own industry. This week they joined pickets (pictured above) manned by workers from Briant Colour Printers, who are 'working-in' to prevent the closure of their factory.

Pickets on the gates of Horne's, the firm responsible for the threat to Briants, were attacked by the police Thursday night last week. The next day dockers at a mass meeting at Tower Hill voted to march down to the picket line.

In mid-afternoon police of the Special Patrol Group moved in, using truncheons against the picket of printers and dockers, throwing middle-aged women against a wall, and beating up anyone who fell into their hands.

Even the local police officers who normally patrol the pickets were astonished at the behaviour of the 'heavy mob'.

The solidarity of dockers and printers seems to have had effect: the manager has agreed to keep the gates shut.

bigger golden handshakes to get workers to quit their jobs. And this week once again, as the dockers strike, the TUC is having its talks with Heath and Co with a view to more conciliation and a voluntary incomes policy.

Compared with this worthless approach, the National Port Shop Stewards Committee has laid it on the line that no more dockland jobs will be sold and that the new technology must be used to benefit dockers, giving them a shorter working week and earlier paid retirement, instead of giving big profits to the bosses and containerising the dockers out of existence.

The dockers are now determined to achieve a clear victory on these issues. Six weeks ago at Chobham Farm container depot they pioneered an agreement that created new jobs. Not only did they ensure that more dockers were taken on, they also achieved a substantial wage increase and cut in working hours for the container workers already there.

The dockers' struggle is a struggle for all workers, the first national co-ordinated fight to resist the misery and oppression of the dole queue. It is essential that all sections of workers give support to it.

This solidarity must continue even if Jack Jones succeeds in browbeating his union's Docks Delegates Conference into trying to end the stoppage. For that conference vastly under-represents the large ports where redundancy threatens. North Cornwall's ports, with 22 dockers, have one delegate, while the Royal group in London, with 4000 dockers, has only two.

If the dockers are victorious, then an enormous blow will have been struck for all workers who wish to push back the rising tide of redundancy. It is up to us all to help make certain of that victory.

EVER SINCE big business newspapers got back into action last Friday, their pages have been littered with attacks on Britain's striking dockers.

These men, it is argued, are holding the nation to ransom. They are a small minority who intend to impose their will on the rest of us by brute force. And, says the press, the real insolence of these selfish men is that they have turned down the wonderful Jones-Aldington plan which would give dockers more job security and bigger golden handshakes than any other group of organised workers.

The propaganda operation is rounded off with all sorts of remarks about the plight of the poor, the low-paid and the old age pensioners, the housewives paying more for their groceries because, it is said, of the strike by these intransigent dockers.

As usual the reality is very different. Last week the dockers spearheaded working-class struggle against the state's power to shackle the trade unions. Their strike and the widespread solidarity action to free the Pentonville Five inflicted a major defeat on the Tory government.

This week Britain's striking dockers are spearheading another crucial struggle—the fight back against unemployment.

In truth, the dockers have picked up the banner that was lit on the Clyde last year. Despite its limitations, the UCS struggle affirmed that workers were not compelled to accept a place on Britain's lengthening dole queues. Workers could intervene and fight.

Month by month the newspapers record

ever higher unemployment figures. From time to time they mention the appalling human consequences of unemployment. Even members of the employing class have expressed their concern. But neither the employers nor the Tories can do anything about the situation because they uphold the system that puts profit before human beings.

Workers, however, can do something about unemployment—and that is precisely what the dockers' strike this week intends to do.

Since the war the docks labour force has been slashed by half. In the past five years alone one third of registered dockers' jobs have been axed while the amount of trade passing through the ports continued to rise.

At the same time, the giant shipping and stevedoring companies have turned modern techniques against dockworkers

in a drive to lower labour costs and worsen working conditions. Container work has been moved outside dockland and, backed by big government grants, new modern and unregistered ports have been opened.

LUKEWARM

In London the dockers have seen the big employers open cold stores outside the dock areas under assumed names while the old wharves were turned to immensely profitable property speculation.

Throughout, the response of the official trade union movement has been pathetic and not just in the case of the dockers.

Even after the imprisonment of five dockers a fortnight ago, Jack Jones did not consider leading his members in a real fight against the Act or the dockers in a real fight for their jobs. He contented himself with making an agreement for

London Port Shop Stewards' Committee thanks all who support the dockers' struggle, particularly those who came to Pentonville and gave financial contributions. With the strike now under way against redundancies, more funds are urgently needed. All donations and messages of support should be sent to the London Port Shop Stewards' Committee c/o M Fenn, 24 Florence Road, Plaistow, London E13.

DOCKERS APPEAL

Forget the 'Red scare'—but there was certainly a plot

THOSE who see Reds under every bed have had a hey-day this week.

The heights of absurdity were probably reached by the Daily Telegraph on Monday. The annual educational camp of the Socialist Labour League was presented as the centre of a conspiracy to bring about the downfall of Western civilisation—as if 41,000 dockers were getting their orders from a few tents in a remote part of Essex.

Meanwhile, the real conspiracies of the past few weeks have been covered up—conspiracies aimed at ensuring the fruition of government plans to fine unions that do not exercise a monolithic control over their members.

Six weeks ago these plans were put in jeopardy when the Court of Appeal decided that the Transport Union was not legally responsible for the actions of shop stewards in Liverpool who had been blacking Heaton's container firm.

In the weeks that followed there was intense political manoeuvring to ensure that the Law Lords reversed this decision. The manoeuvring became much more frantic when the magnificent response to the dockers' call for solidarity with the five imprisoned in Pentonville proved it was impossible for the courts to defeat the workers by a frontal attack on the rank and file.

Previously, Lord Wilberforce had said the Law Lords would not reach a decision on the case until October. But suddenly on Monday last week, as the solidarity movement grew, it was announced that the judgment was due within two days.

The powers-that-be did not dare release the five until they were sure they had another string to their legal bow.

But even before the jailings the manoeuvring was under way. This is confirmed by a copy of a letter from Transport Union leader Jack Jones to TUC general secretary Vic Feather that has come into our hands. It was written on 17 July—the Monday before the five went to Pentonville.

Jones writes that 'Our impression was that the House of Lords were in a great hurry [over the Heaton case]. They did not seem to want to be taken through the case in the traditional way that cases are dealt with in other courts.'

He describes how the lawyer for Heaton's was able to 'gallop' through his case, receiving 'no direct questions from the judges', while when the union's lawyer spoke 'one would have thought that it was he who had lost the case in the Court of Appeal. He was subjected to more questions in the first 20 minutes than either Mr York or Mr Bingham (lawyers for Heaton's) in a little over three days. It amazed our lawyers...'

Jones adds, implying that there was political pressure on the court: 'It does make one wonder whether everything is seemingly cut and dried in spite of it being such an important issue to the trade unions.'

Jones' letter is clearly of great importance to all trade unionists. But if it had been left to Jack Jones or Vic Feather, this would never have come to light.

Copies of the letter were sent to executive members of the Transport Workers' Union only. They were marked 'private and confidential', presumably so that the rank and file who make up the union would not know what Jones himself thought of the judgment. Perhaps he is frightened that when the facts are known union members will insist that he refuses to pay fines to a rigged court implementing an anti-working class law.

WORLD NEWS

'Man-made' famine kills thousands

A TRAGEDY of Biafra-type proportions, hardly noticed by the British press, is being enacted in the backward and isolated country of Afghanistan. The New York Times reports that half a million people are suffering from acute hunger, many starving to death.

'The symbols of the past few months here have been the sounds of once proud men crying and the sight of veiled women grazing like animals on field grass, and of children lying like tiny rag heaps beside roads.'

'The final days of life for sick and starving children in the barren, famine-stricken hills of central Afghanistan are spent pleading for a nugget of mutton fat from the town butcher, drinking water from a mud puddle, picking a precious few grains of rice out of the dirt, and trying to swallow roots and sharp toxic grass that swells their faces and puffs their eyelids nearly shut.'

A horrible natural catastrophe, you might think. Except there is nothing natural and inevitable about it. It has been man-made, just like so much else of the horror in the modern world. And not just

by the corrupt and barbaric Afghan government, but also by the US and Russia, who, as the Financial Times noted last August, 'have moved into a tacit but sophisticated rapport in their aid efforts to Afghanistan.'

Although the present famine was forecast more than two years ago by agricultural experts, nothing was done to counteract it. The American Agency for International Development just ignored the warnings.

Prestige

Both the US and the Russian governments boast that they have given Afghanistan considerable loans. But both have also insisted that the money be spent on grandiose projects of no benefit to the mass of the population.

Great new highways have been built to link parts of the country previously separated by weeks of trekking. A great boon for foreign tourists—but no use to

the poverty-stricken Afghans who travel by foot, donkey or camel.

The same is true of other projects. 'Hydroelectric dams with insufficient water-flow to produce the required power, power plants with inadequate transmission lines, irrigation schemes for rock strewn or infertile lands . . .', said the Financial Times on 17 July last year.

The aid donors have been 'less interested in real economic development than in large, identifiable and politically prestigious projects.'

But the local people have to bear the cost. Resources have to be found to pay for the upkeep of the roads, dams, and power stations. There are also interest repayments. These now account for between 30 and 40 per cent of the country's export earnings.

Effectively, the so-called aid has ensured that the Afghan government is in the grip of those who made the loans and needs further loans to pay off the interest. The

country is now mortgaged to the great powers to the tune of 475 million dollars. A quarter of the money is owed to the US and three-quarters to Russia.

The Afghan government in turn has a desperately poor local population. It cannot improve their living standards: the average income of 50p a week has shown no rise in years. So instead it devotes 40 per cent of its budget to military expenditure aimed 'to quell internal insurrection rather than for use against external foes'.

It is possible that in the next few months prominent figures in the advanced countries will suddenly discover the present famine. They may weep a few tears and boost their own prestige by putting their names to appeals for charitable funds.

But it can safely be prophesied that the rulers of neither East nor West will relax their grip on the country and reverse the policies which have produced the starvation and misery.

The people of Afghanistan are as much victims as the people of Vietnam and Czechoslovakia of rival, competing, minority ruling classes that divide the world.

CHRIS HARMAN

Italian socialist party breaks up

by Ian Birchall

THE Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity, the PSIUP, decided at its congress on 16 July to dissolve itself and join the Communist Party. A minority has opted to go to the Socialist Party while a handful of members determined to keep the PSIUP alive will become yet another tiny faction on the Italian left.

The PSIUP originated in a split in the PSI, Italian Socialist Party. In the post-war period the PSI co-operated closely with the Communist Party. Its leader, Nenni, attended Stalin's funeral and stood in line with CP leaders from all over the world.

Most important of all, the CP and PSI co-operated in Italy's biggest trade union, the CGIL.

From the mid-1950s the PSI began to move away from the CP and closer to the other parties of the centre though it contained a number of left tendencies.

Late in 1963 Nenni and the Socialist Party agreed to join a coalition government with the Christian Democrats (the so-called 'Centre-Left'). This shocked many left-wing members of the PSI and it did not suit Socialist trade union leaders, who found it easier, in a period of rising militancy, not to have their hands tied by support for the government.

So in January 1964, the PSIUP was born. It has considerable strength in some regions, and about two thirds of the PSI trade union officials in the CGIL joined it.

Many people on the British left had great hopes in the PSIUP. In January 1966 Clive Jenkins wrote in *Tribune*: 'One thing is certain, the PSIUP is proving magnetic to students—and showing some signs of attracting the technicians. The British Left will be well advised to watch this independent, free-wheeling, free-thinking party.'

In its early years the PSIUP made some electoral headway. But though there were undoubtedly some sincere revolutionaries in its ranks, the PSIUP never broke from the politics of tail-ending the Communist Party.

The PSIUP was quite incapable of offering any real lead in this situation and while the Communist Party maintained its grip on the mass of workers, various groups began to grow rapidly on the extreme left with little politics other than the cult of spontaneity and extreme activism.

The PSIUP had outlived its usefulness and moved closer and closer to the CP. In last May's election it lost all its parliamentary seats and its decision to dissolve was simply the confirmation of its bankrupt politics.

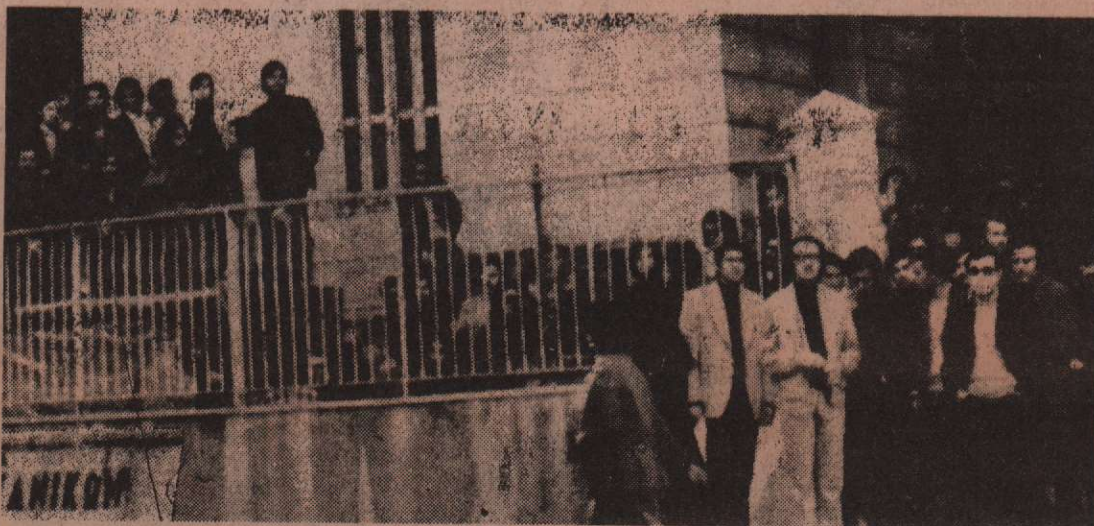
Workers' manifesto group arrested

THE GREEK COLONELS' dictatorship has arrested a group of six workers, a bookseller and a surveyor. They are accused of conspiring to break into houses, rob with violence and blackmail, and of planning these acts as a gang.

The reality is quite different. In their manifesto, the group declared they want to see the working class in Greece take power through workers' councils. They stressed that this was the immediate task for socialists to fight for as the only real alternative to the capitalist system.

Though working under the junta's police terror, the group had managed (according to the newspapers) to gain some influence over building workers, traditionally one of the most militant sections of the Greek working class. It seems, also, that their manifesto had circulated widely among other workers and had been well received.

This is the real reason why the secret police cracked down on the group—because it is a group of young workers that has posed the question of power in Greece on a solid class basis.



A recent demonstration in Greece

Yet the public accusations betray the junta's terror. All the emphasis of the reports in the papers is given to the various plans the group had for raising money—plans tortured out of each man over a period of two months.

Exploitation

Much was made of a piece of rope, a common household plunger and a pair of rubber gloves found in the possession of one man—who happened to be a building worker. Much was made, too, of plans to get money—and little was made of the group's ideas and what they were fighting for. The prosecution states: 'In order

that this gang could get workers to help it with its plans [robberies], it promised them a future without exploitation where they would rule society themselves.'

The junta knows full well that the real danger of such groups is their ideas and not the plans to 'rob and steal'. This is evident even from the scantiness of the accusation. It is no accident that the arrests came in May at the time of the first open political demonstration by the students.

When the mass movement in Greece is coming once more into the open, such groups which threaten to give it a lead towards revolutionary politics and away from reformism present the most mortal danger to Greek capitalism.

LETTERS

Judgements on Republican Movement 'arise out of ignorance'

THE statement by the executive of the International Socialists was read and studied by a number of the men here in Long Kesh. I have been asked by those men to make the following comments.

We find ourselves in agreement with the spirit of the statement but feel that certain judgments made concerning the Republican Movement arise from ignorance of our activities.

In the North we have made efforts to establish working relations with politically aware sections of the Protestant working class, for example Belfast Housing Action contacts with the Shankill Redevelopment Association, Derry's Connolly Club with local Protestant workers demanding better housing, the West Belfast Democratic Socialist Alliance which sought to unify all 'people's organisations' round a common set of minimum demands.

The fact that these activities were never publicised was due in part to our reluctance to identify people who could have been in grave danger for associating with Republicans.

In the South the Republican Movement has been to the forefront of every possible agitation, for example Dublin Housing Action, National Waterways Restoration League, Land League, and in

defence of the trade unions. Particularly it should be noted that it is only the Republican Movement which has sought to educate the people on the sell-out of mineral wealth and land.

We have our weaknesses to be sure, but they do not stem from a 'bankrupt

political tradition'. Our tradition properly understood is and will continue to be our greatest strength. Connolly's 'Labour and Irish History' is a good point for British socialists to begin.—DES O'HAGAN, Long Kesh Concentration Camp, Lisburn, Co Antrim.

Nothing but a yarn

IT WOULD be difficult to find more untruths or errors in one article than those contained in Cottons' Yarns (22 July) in your paragraph concerning Bristol Trades Council.

a) Bristol Trades Council could not possibly have been 'astonished' at its July meeting by the delegation of Bristol busmen led by Jack Hodge. The trades council never met them; the executive committee of 20 met them and it was pre-arranged. In response to a letter we offered them 20 minutes (at 8pm) in the middle of a crowded agenda.

b) When Jack Hodge rose to speak he apologised for a complete misunderstanding, for the trades council had never lodged a protest about the rise in fares. The busmen had met with this charge FROM THEIR BOSSES and upon inquiry had found it to be false.

c) This did not stop some executive

committee members from pointing out that they would support such protests with the same ferocity as they would support the busmen in their fight for higher wages. So far as I am aware, your correspondent never opened his mouth . . . he cannot have been very indignant at the time.

d) The sneer about the trades council officers 'doing their sums and working out how much bounce they would lose if the TGWU closed its coffers' is not only untrue but nasty, for the present parlous state of trades council finances is not entirely unrelated to the activities of an IS member.

I trust that in the interests of the working-class movement in Bristol and in order to protect your own integrity you will find space to publish this letter.—DON BATEMAN, (vice-president, Bristol Trades Council).

International Socialism 46
International Socialism 47
INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM
International Socialism 49

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The army come not as peacemakers

NO ONE on the left should be fooled by the statements put out by the British Army this week and reprinted with approval by the press, in which it is claimed that the removal of the barricades and the occupation of the 'No go' areas in Northern Ireland is meant to restore 'peace' and 'order'.

The forces that were battering down the barricades with Centurion tanks on Monday were the same forces, commanded by the same generals, getting their orders from the same Westminster politicians, as carried out the cold-blooded murders in Derry on Bloody Sunday just six months ago.

William Whitelaw, the Tory overlord in Northern Ireland, speaks of 'getting the IRA off the backs of the people'. Yet for three years, ever since drunken police, B Specials and Orangemen tried to club their way into the Bogside, the armed forces of the IRA have been protecting the local population against many more murders of the Bloody Sunday type.

In the ghettos of Derry and Belfast this protection is still needed. In three weeks 30 Catholics have been killed as a result of murders by Protestant extremists in Belfast.

The British Army has also played a role, not only in failing to prevent murders, but in actually initiating them. There are well-validated reports of British soldiers in plain clothes assassinating people they believe—often wrongly—to be Republicans.

Even if the Provisional IRA were a band of the most vicious and cold-blooded murderers in the world, the British Army would not be bringing 'peace' if it eliminated them.

But the Provisionals are not cold-blooded murderers. In the columns of Socialist Worker we have repeatedly criticised their bombing campaign. We do not believe that destroying small bits of property belonging to the British ruling class will ever force them to abandon their control over Ireland. The bombings inevitably, if inadvertently, cost the lives of many ordinary workers and increase the Protestants' feeling of identification with British rule.

The bombings in Belfast a fortnight ago bore bitter witness to the correctness of this argument. The sense of horror created by the carnage succeeded, as the British government never could, in isolating, at least temporarily, the Provisionals from the Catholic population that had protected them in the past.

Even so, the deaths caused on that day were in no way comparable to the murders carried out by the British Army and the Orange extremists. When the army shoots, it shoots to kill—as Bloody Sunday so vividly illustrated. When the Provos bomb they almost always attempt to prevent civilian deaths.

As the Sunday Times reported on 27 July: 'The Public Protection Agency and the Samaritans received a total of 21 warnings, some of them duplicated' before the 22 bombings—some of the warnings more than an hour before. If civilians were maimed and killed, a large part of the blame lies with the British Army for ignoring the warnings, whether by accident or design.

As socialists we must criticise the bombings—not least because they play right into the hands of the British government. But that should not blind us to the real source of all the present misery and horror of the Irish situation: the economic and military control of British big business over Ireland.

We have to continue to give our support to both wings of the IRA in so far as they resist the efforts of the British Army to re-establish its domination. But we also have to recognise that the bombing campaign of the Provos has proved that they lack the working-class socialist politics necessary if British big business and its army are ever to face a movement that has real mass support beyond the Catholic ghettos of the North.

Only when such a movement is built will the aim of the IRA—a unified independent Ireland—be achieved.

Political trials start again

IT IS not only in Britain that rulers are desperately resorting to the law courts and prisons in an effort to maintain their control. In Czechoslovakia on Monday the latest in a series of political trials began.

The chief person accused, like those convicted in other recent trials, cannot possibly be classified as a 'Western agent' or a 'reactionary'—Milan Huebl, former head of the Czech Communist Party training centre and once a close friend of the Russian-appointed head of the Party, Husak. When Husak replaced Dubcek in 1969, Huebl urged support for the move.

Meanwhile in Yugoslavia, another political trial has been going on. Three students have been jailed for between one and two years for 'criminal acts of association against the people and the state'. The real allegation against them is that they attempted to form a Trotskyist group in Belgrade.

The French and Italian socialist parties have already protested at the Czech trials. The only trouble is that their main motivation seems to be to prove their pliability to the moderate, pro-capitalist politicians with whom they want an electoral alliance.

Genuine socialists will protest for a different reason—because the only way in which working people can control their own lives, workers' power, needs the fullest possible discussion and debate. Any regime that denies this cannot be socialist.



COTTONS WARS

Red-faced

WHO is the silliest Tory of them all? Cottons' Cup goes to Geoffrey Finsberg, MP for Hampstead.

Whenever the workers achieve a victory, you can bet that some rattled loonie will attempt to start a witch-hunt. Mr Finsberg did not disappoint us. Rushing into the Commons on Friday, he waved a poster that proclaimed 'Five trade unionists are inside—why aren't you out' and shrieked that it was all part of a dastardly plot to engineer a national dock strike.

Finsberg's reasoning? The poster, he claimed, was printed in June on the orders of the Ports Shop Stewards Committee. It carried the names of the five jailed men—Clancy, Steer, Merrick, Watkins and Turner.

This 'proved', Finsberg lathered on, that the dockers had deliberately set up their 'martyrs' well in advance and had planned to have the men jailed in order to spark off a dock strike. He drew this conclusion from the fact that the poster bore the imprint: 'Printed in England by Briant Colour Printing, Joint Chapels, during their work-in June 1972'.

Sad to relate, the word was a simple typesetting mistake and should have been July. A leaflet produced by the Socialist Worker printshop the weekend after the dockers were arrested had been reproduced photographically by Briants as a poster.

It would have been impossible for either printers to have run off the posters before that weekend because they were printed at the request of the port stewards on the picket line at Pentonville to the printers.

It would not have been possible to have chosen the five names in advance because the NIRC picked them quite arbitrarily, leaving it to Midland Cold Storage's private detectives to attempt to identify a few of the many pickets at the Hackney depot.

It could only have been a plot if the dockers had been working in cahoots with Sir John Donaldson, president of the NIRC. Over to you, Geoffrey...



Five Trade Unionists are inside. WHY AREN'T YOU OUT?

NEW recruits to the usual volunteer scab labour force that springs to life during strikes: a group of nuns helped unload fruit and veg in Covent Garden market. They were dressed, of course, in black.

Beefy Para

IN ADDITION to doing dockers out of their jobs, the Vestey Union International outfit, the group behind Midland Cold Storage, has played a small part in trying to set back the struggle for freedom in Ireland.

General manager of Dewhurst's, your friendly high street butchering chain, owned by Vestey, is genial Colin Cullimore, a former major in the Paras.

Last autumn the southern Irish government sponsored a promotion campaign in Britain's butchers' shops for Irish beef. Ever loyal to the cause, our Colin refused to allow any of the publicity material in the Dewhurst's chain because 'it would upset the customers' in such a time of trouble in poor old Ulster. Wonder he didn't have recruiting posters for the Paras on show after Derry's Bloody Sunday.

Crossed line

WHEN the committee of the London Overseas Telephones No 2 branch of the UPW met to consider action in support of the jailed dockers last Wednesday at mid-day, they received a telegram from hairy chops Tom Jackson saying: 'The executive is meeting Thursday to decide what action to take... In the meantime your branch is instructed not to take any action whatsoever.'

Nevertheless the committee decided to stop their members going in to work when the evening shift came on at 5.30pm and to hold a meeting with a recommendation for strike action. Among those who crossed the picket

line was Mrs Beryl Treble, national president of the union.

Of course, the stoppage did not last long. By 6pm the dockers were out and the telephonists went back to work.

Distorting

LAST Friday, 28 July, the Daily Mirror reappeared after the four-day shutdown with a front-page editorial complaining about the printers' solidarity strike.

It said: 'Nothing is more dangerous in these troubled days than a black-out on newspaper reports and comment. No democracy is so secure that it can survive in a darkening atmosphere when nobody precisely knows who said what to whom, and when and where and why.'

But on page 5 of that same issue the Mirror gave us an example of the kind of 'democracy' and 'free speech' that it believes in. This was the story: 'There was at least one dissenting voice in the crowd outside Transport House yesterday. While the dockers were united, calling for a strike, the voice of protest was raised by one housewife ready to argue her case with the men. They didn't mind her having the last word. As long as they could have the last laugh.'

The true facts are that this supposedly 'anti-docker' housewife was parading outside Transport House with a large placard urging Scotland Yard to arrest Heath, Hailsham and Rippon for treason in connection with their efforts to get Britain to join the Common Market.

But because the Mirror hates the dockers and supports Common Market entry it reverses the facts and declines to report that this 'protesting' housewife wanted the dockers to help her arrest various government ministers. This is the truth of the Mirror's 'free speech'—freedom to lie and distort. That's why the absence of the Mirror last week was no loss.

THIS and the next three issues of Socialist Worker will be reduced to eight pages to allow our editorial and printing staff to take their summer holidays. The paper will be back to 12 pages at the end of August with special reports and features on the eve of this year's crucial Trades Union Congress.



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THE working-class movement will never be the same again. Mass industrial action has freed five dockers. But it has done more than that. It has transformed the fight against the Tories and the employers and opened up enormous new possibilities for building a revolutionary socialist organisation. In these special articles, Socialist Worker traces the development of the current conflict, records the miserable scuttling of the official leaders of the movement and draws the lessons for the even more decisive struggles that lie ahead . . .



The five who went to jail: from left, Tony Merrick, Conny Clancy, Derek Watkins, Vic Turner and Bernie Steer

The road to Pentonville

IT TOOK one cooling-off period on the railwaymen and the £55,000 fines on the Transport and General Workers' Union for the Trade Union Congress to jettison its opposition to the Industrial Relations Act. On Friday 21 April Vic Feather announced that unions would go before the National Industrial Relations Court and pay the fines it levied.

That same day Jimmy Symes, chairman of the Liverpool docks shop stewards committee, said: 'The fines will not influence the dockers to lift the blacking. We are not defying the union. We are the union.' Britain's dockers have kept his word.

Caught in the employers' inevitable drive to turn technology against society, the dockers picked up what looked like the dying flame of organised labour's opposition to open state control of the trade union movement. They stepped up their picketing and blacking.

In so doing they launched a struggle which profoundly rallied whole sections of the working class against its adversaries—the employing class, its government and its law.

The outcome of the dockers' struggle has not been to defeat the Tories or the poisonous Industrial Relations Act. But it has led already to the freeing of five jailed trade unionists by the direct action of the working-class movement, to the Tories turning the heat back on the official institutions of the trade union movement and to the first serious jobs fight by any national section of the British working class.

The dockers' struggle for their livelihoods and for the unfettered freedom to pursue trade union action had three storm centres. The law attacked them first in Liverpool, then in Hull, then in London.

In Liverpool, the leadership of the Transport Union alone collapsed. In Hull and London the shop stewards and rank and file dockers, threatened with the law, did not hesitate to pursue their democratically decided course of action. They defied the court, and its rulings.

The trade union leaders, faced with the massive fines against the

TGWU for the Heaton's blacking, paid up.

Then one of the blacked container firms, Panalpina of Hull, moved in on the NIRC action. In the second week of May it got a court order against the blacking.

Walter Cunningham, chairman of the Hull port shop stewards committee, studiously boycotted and defied the court. Sir John Donaldson, court president, declined to make a move against him for contempt. He and the Tories were content to continue putting the pressure on the official unions to force 'their agents', shop stewards, to comply with the law.

Boost

But the first week of June saw the Tories' so far successful strategy of crumbling the railwaymen through their leaders get a real slap in the face. On Thursday 1 June the result of the state-ordered ballot on more railway industrial action was announced—a five to one majority for struggle.

Though they did not formally award the railwaymen the distinction of being yet another special case, the Tories were compelled to allow a boost on their 'last and final' pay offer of two weeks earlier.

In this situation the Tory Cabinet changed its tactics. While there was little question of putting the Act on ice, as the TUC was later to suggest in one of its familiar cocktail party metaphors, the

Tory Cabinet was now driving firmly for a more pally form of class collaboration, talks with the official leadership. They were relying on the Jack Jones-Lord Aldington committee to turn the gas down in the docks. The committee met for the first time on Tuesday 6 June.

Meanwhile, London's dockers were stepping up their seven-week-old blacking and picketing campaign. Chobham Farm hit the news when the depot workers decided (doubtless at the instigation of management) to take their fellow TGWU members to the National Industrial Relations Court.

Monday 12 June saw the court issue a temporary order restraining Vic Turner, Bernie Steer and Alan Williams from picketing and blacking.

The following day the Court of Appeal, in line with the new Tory policy of chumming up to the leadership of the TUC, quashed the £55,000 fine on the Transport and General for the Heaton's blacking and on Wednesday Donaldson turned on the dockers' shop stewards who were picketing Chobham Farm.

No court could ignore the three dockers' actions, said Donaldson. 'This is a threat to the rule of law.'

At 1pm on Thursday 15 June London's dockers met to hear the report of the previous days Docks Delegate Conference which had voted to postpone a national strike for six weeks. But the key discussion was on the jail threat. London decided to strike until all proceedings were dropped. Liverpool and Hull were of the same mind and the strike spread like wildfire through Britain's ports by the next morning.

Tipstaff

It was a historic Friday. Slowly the mass picket line swelled, with the three threatened dockers literally at its heart.

Everybody awaited the appearance of this man they had never heard of before—the tipstaff. But another unheard-of figure prevented the arrests.

The Official Solicitor went to the Court of Appeal 'on his own initiative' and the arrests were halted. The dockers never wanted martyrs. But they were sad that their three brothers were not lifted. They were ready to fight and unleash the movement that could smash the Tory Act.

Chobham Farm was a great victory despite being disguised in the sober clothes of legal manoeuvre. In the next week the dockers concluded an agreement



Mass meeting at London's Tower Hill on 25 July: dockers, printers, building workers and many others march on Pentonville.

to have registered labour in the depot without any loss of jobs to the unregistered workers. They were on the road to victory.

As the dockers' pickets continued their struggle, at Midland Cold Storage in London and throughout Hull and Liverpool the TUC was busy gasping for new talks with Heath.

But on Monday 3 July Midland Cold Storage went to the NIRC. By the Friday an interim order had been granted against seven dockers, five of whom were to end up in Pentonville Jail.

Over the weekend the employers got busy stirring it against the dockers. Counter picketing started.

On Thursday 13 July the TUC and the employers' federation agreed on voluntary conciliation. The knights of the labour movement agreed to meet the fountainhead, Edward Heath.

And even as the port employers prepared to try to get the London dockers jailed, the TUC leaders were meeting Heath.

That Friday the National Industrial Relations Court decided where the threat lay, with five dockers who in the finest traditions of trade unionism had held both to their principles and the actions that flow from them.

On a small but tense mass picket line outside Midland Cold Storage, Tony Merrick, Conny Clancy and Derek Watkins were arrested. That afternoon the counter pickets suspended their action in solidarity with dockers facing jail.

The forces of the state came for Bernie Steer in the night. Vic Turner was lifted on Saturday's picket outside Pentonville.

By the weekend the major ports were paralysed.

The Tories undoubtedly believed they had chosen their time well. Liverpool, the West of Scotland, a majority of mine-

workers and the car industry were on holiday. And the press propaganda feast about container workers standing up to dockers had set a more favourable climate than at Chobham Farm.

Pickets

But the dockers' calls for solidarity action were not to go unheeded. Friday night the Fleet Street electricians moved, though the newspapers appeared on Saturday morning. That day's glorious sunshine saw a big London working-class demonstration against redundancies in the print industry turn for Pentonville.

And that night the NATSOPA members in Fleet Street moved. On Sunday dockers threw big

picket lines for printers were SOGAT van the papers were

All the port resistance was had never dockers' strikers Monday morn of the whole movement, sol from the bott

That day's cabinet memb had little part something. It strike action on Wednesday. Aldington ph Fortunately: to boast its

White Feather for 'do nothing' TUC leaders

BY ROGER PROTZ

WHEN the five were arrested July, Vic Feather immediately in and anger of a traditions and i union moveme

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The battle is won but war goes on

THIS has been the greatest victory for the British working class for more than half a century. The battle has been won, but the war against capitalism is still going on.

After such a great victory it is important to take stock, view the battle field as a whole and, while full of enthusiasm and the will to struggle, keep a cool head and think out the strategy, tactics and organisational measures necessary to lead the struggle forward.

The motive behind the Tories' attack on the working class is not the nastiness of the rulers, nasty though they be, but the deepening crisis of world capitalism.

The weapons the ruling class uses are determined largely by the immense strength of workers' organisation and workers' resistance. In fact, as Lenin put it, there is no crisis of capitalism the capitalists cannot find a way out of if the workers are ready to pay the price.

The workers' resistance makes it more and more difficult for the bosses to get their way. Let us look at the weapons they have been using for the last few years.

Incomes Policy: the aim of this is to shift the distribution of the national income from wages to profits.

In the 1920s and 30s, with massive unemployment and a weak shop organisation, the employers never dreamed of offering a wage rise of 3½ per cent or 5 per cent. Instead they cut wages all round.

Dictated

Productivity deals: pay homage to working-class strength. Basically, a productivity deal is a bitter pill in terms of worse conditions, speed-up, etc, but it is covered with sugar.

In the 1920s and 30s management didn't dream of saying, 'We will give you an extra £3 a week on condition you accept deterioration in working conditions.' They simply dictated: 'If you want a job, have it. If you don't, out you get.'

Key Wage Settlements: The idea of taking on the postmen and keeping down their wages, plus setting an example to other sections of the working class, is again homage to working-class strength.

In the 1920s and 30s the employers reduced all workers' wages. There wasn't one weak section to become an example to the strong sections—all sections of the working class were weak.

Anti-trade union legislation: Again homage to our strength. When shop organisation was weak and unemployment massive, the philosophy of capitalism was non-intervention of the state in labour relations.

Let there be a free for all and the best man win. And you can guess who won.

But, because of the present strength of workers' resistance, the capitalist machine does not work the way the bosses want. The driver steers and the machine doesn't turn. He presses the accelerator and it doesn't speed up. He puts on the brake and it doesn't stop.

What, in heaven's name, is affecting the engine? The answer is, the workers' will and ability to resist.

For example, the question of key wage settlements: It is true that the government managed to beat the post-

men at the beginning of 1971. They got only a 9 per cent rise. This meant a cut in real wages of some 5 or 6 per cent.

When the cost of living is rising by 10 per cent the workers must get 15 per cent—as a third of any wage rise goes in deductions—just to stay in the same place. But the defeat of the postmen did not prevent Chrysler workers getting a rise of £6 a week in the same month.

Ted Heath and before him Harold Wilson believed that unemployment would introduce discipline on the wages front. (Remember Wilson's 'shake-out of the labour market?')

For nearly two decades Paish's Law was accepted as a holy truth. Professor F W Paish of the London School of Economics had been economic adviser to the Tory government. His theory was that a certain level of unemployment—anything between 2 and 2½ per cent—would break workers' resistance and put them in their place, so that wages would be contained. However,

It is true that if a ship loses its rudder the captain may use the left engine and stop the right, and then use the right and stop the left.

But this is a costly and ineffective way of moving a ship. If the five rank and file dockers militants had to be freed from prison perhaps pliable Jack Jones can serve now as the disciplinarian of the rank and file.

The threat of £55,000 over his head may serve to soften him up. We always knew that we have the best trade union leaders money can buy!

Workers' memories, however, aren't as short as all that. Perhaps two months ago a £55,000 fine would have terrified the rank and file, at least for a time, into submission. But why should workers stop picketing Midland Cold Storage even if Jack Jones has to pay the £55,000?

Victory

There is no compulsion on him to pay. He can fight back. If a strike can free the five, it can also prevent the imposition of a fine. If the TUC declared in advance that they would bring the country out on a one-day strike every time a fine was imposed, the ruling class would find the gain not worth while.

Every day workers in this country produce goods and services to the value of £150 million, so let's say to our rulers: 'You fine us £55,000 and we will take it back not in thousands but in millions'. That is only fair. It is not an equal exchange, but then we do not live in an equal society. So again this weapon of the ruling class somehow doesn't hit the target.

Partial struggles: The other side of the coin of the ineffectiveness of Tory oppression is the fragmentation and volatility of the workers' struggle. If we juxtapose the great victory of the dockers and workers who came to their aid over the five days, against the fight of the Fine Tubes workers for more than two years, we see how fragmented the struggle is.

The management of Fine Tubes are far smaller in calibre, in weight, in resources than the executive committee of the capitalist class as represented by the state. On the other hand, the workers of Fine Tubes are members of two of the biggest trade unions in the country—the TGWU with 1,700,000 members and the AUEW with 1,400,000.

How is it that unions with more than three million members cannot crack a peanut the size of the Fine Tubes management? The answer is that the trade union bureaucracy was much more effective in paralyzing aid to the Fine Tube workers than in paralyzing the dockers and the workers who came to their aid.

But the struggle is fragmented also in another way. Take the miners. They won a magnificent victory. They smashed the Tory wage norm. They wiped the smile off Ted Heath's face.

Speculators

But they could not prevent the rise in the cost of living, or the loss of Family Incomes Supplement, free milk etc. What they held in their hand largely slipped through their fingers.

Again, the dockers five weeks ago saved three of their members from going to prison. But the very same weekend the giants of the City of London went on strike and they and other big businessmen transferred hundreds of millions of pounds out of this country.

The result? The floating pound and rising prices. The docker can prevent his mates being arrested but he cannot prevent his children losing school milk or the rise in prices now or after Britain joins the Common Market.

Every partial struggle under capitalism means that no victory is really complete.

Volatility: The working-class movement has been suffering the last few years not only from fragmentation, from the partial nature of the struggle, but also from extreme volatility.

If one looks back to the 1920s or 30s the struggle was largely systematic in its development. One event followed another in practically a straight line.

If one looks at the 1940s and 50s until the middle 1960s, again for a whole generation we face a systematic development in the class struggle. Year by year workers' real wages improved practically everywhere. Strikes were small in size, short in duration and practically always victorious.

Of course to all these steady developments there were important exceptions. After all, capitalism is an anarchic system and there cannot be any



...ie Steer.

onville



trades united to

and the papers. But divided. Then the drivers moved and the shut down.

meant the mood of spreading. Ports that known an all-out shut down on key sections broad working-class solidarity action spread

the TUC inner decided that it alternative but to do would recommend the General Council The pitiful Jones- was rushed out. there were no papers greatness. The TUC

London dockers and jailed on 21 rather responded with all the verve man steeped in the heritage of the trade

in prison in cases nothing,' said the of the TUC. 'It makes problems much harder must be suspended.' The damage that the Act is doing to the nation is body.'

clear to anybody was voice of 10 million intended to do about could be summed up about the arrests were a political blow but because they trod along to chats with Heath

members were in time off from his the Jones-Aldington to echo Feather's are an example of the Act.'

went to see Heath and refused to negotiate while the five men were still in jail.

Tuesday saw one of the biggest London working-class demonstrations in living memory. 'Maudling in, dockers out' was one of the many cries that expressed the sense of outrage and the fighting spirit. As the march thronged through the city, it passed Mondial House, the huge Cubitt's construction site. Building workers started to swing down the scaffolds yelling to their mates to come off the job and march to set the dockers free.

That evening the movement was spreading still: to London busmen, Sheffield engineers, airport workers. The government's carefully chosen time may have looked right on the calendar, but their plans were shredded by important sections of the working-class movement.

Stoppage

On Wednesday morning counter pickets from Midland Cold Storage, scene of the dockers' arrest, suspended their picket and brought their men out in support of the Pentonville five.

The Tory government was shaking. It could all have mushroomed into a general strike to smash the Act, even the government itself.

The TUC General Council met that Wednesday morning and endorsed the proposition of the TUC inner cabinet for a one-day all-out stoppage the following Monday.

Heath and Co ran for cover in the tried and tested shape of the legal manoeuvre. The scheme was to put the pressure back on Jack Jones to control his stewards. This would provide the pretext to free the five.

London's legal profession was accordingly thrown into chaos,

with the Tories openly manipulating the timing of the hearings to give the Official Solicitor some credibility for working yet another miracle. And in public none of our masters dared mention that it was a mass movement that had somersaulted them.

At 5.15pm Sir John Donaldson, stressing that he had not been influenced in any way by outside forces, gave the order to free the five.

What a victory. What a crushing blow for the men of law and order and jail bars for workers' struggle.

But the Tories, and their Act, their whole range of anti-working class activities, are not gone. Impelled by the crazy dictat of the capitalist system which bids them to represent its needs as the needs of all humanity, they lied in their teeth and announced that it all vindicated the Industrial Relations Act. But they were still in power and that is what matters to them.

But meanwhile something completely new was in the air. Whole sections of the toiling masses had intervened directly in the affairs of state and with marvellous success. Out of that battle and those which are already following on its heels, the dockers and their brothers and sisters in struggle have already rekindled the flame of working class opposition to the capitalist state and its anti-union laws.

Age old illusions about the independence of the law, the judiciary and the press were in tatters for whole sections of the working class. The dockers got set for the first nationally co-ordinated struggle against unemployment, for the shorter working week, for technology set to human ends.

And, most important of all, socialist ideas began to connect with the mass struggle. It is a historic beginning.

In those few sentences he revealed the true, snivelling attitude of the 'party of the working class', its hatred and fear of militant, class-conscious workers and its support for vicious legislation against the unions.

In the days that followed, Prentice and Harold Wilson stressed time and again that workers must obey the law even if it is a 'bad' law. Parliament, they said, is the place to change such laws.

Fortunately hundreds of thousands of workers, aware of Labour's own dirty hands in the shackling-the-unions business, took no notice of their advice.

It was left to the rank and file to lead and spread the giant strike wave against the jailings.

With the exception of some leaders in the printing unions, the mighty officials of the movement were struck dumb as their members stopped work in industry after industry. It was only when they began to size up the enormous potential of this mass movement, its implicit condemnation of their silence and cowardice and the threat it posed to their plush jobs and cosy relations with the bosses that they began to tail after the rank and file.

On Monday evening members of the TUC General Council hurried to Downing Street for a brief, abortive meeting with Heath. They asked him to

put the Act 'on ice'. He refused. The General Council then decided to 'reluctantly defer' its talks planned for the following day with the government and the CBI on the state of the economy.

By Tuesday there was a strong smell of burning blue serge in the air around Congress House as the union leaders shifted uneasily in their chairs, wondering what action they could take to regain the leadership of the movement. Official action had to be as limited as possible in order to keep a tight rein on the rank and file. An all-out, open-ended general strike was too dangerous to contemplate.

Refusal

The Engineering Union pointed the way out of the impasse by calling a one-day national stoppage for the following Monday if the dockers were not released. This was the formula put to the full meeting of the TUC General Council on Wednesday by engineering president Hugh Scanlon. It was his first known move since the dockers were arrested.

The strike call was carried by 18 votes to seven with two abstentions. The TUC press office refuses to name the seven but we feel that these heroes should bask in the limelight.

even with unemployment running at a million, Paish's Law did not work at all.

Workers' organisation is too strong for unemployment of the present magnitude to break their will to fight. Actually, unemployment in many cases spurs workers on to further wage claims. A Dundee building worker told me about a year ago: 'Because of the heavy unemployment among builders in my town we decided not to work for less than £1 an hour'.

The Paish logic on the other hand is that if under conditions of more or less full employment a building worker is ready to work for 75p, he will come cap in hand to the boss and be ready to accept a wage of 60p if there is unemployment.

But the workers argue exactly the opposite. 'If I am sure of 40 hours a week, then I can manage on 75p. But if there is unemployment I must demand at least £1.'

Finally, the Industrial Relations Act didn't work the way the Tories expected or hoped. Now we don't have to waste too much space to prove this, emerging as we are from five days that shook Tory rule.

They were: Lord Cooper and David Basnett of the General and Municipal, Jack Peel of the Dyers and Bleachers, Walter Anderson of NALGO, Roy Grantham of the clerical workers, Crawford of the miners' deputies and Frank Chapple of the electricians and plumbers.

Mr Chapple spoke passionately against the strike call. Rising to even greater intellectual heights than usual, he said a one-day stoppage would drag the country inexorably closer to 'revolution'.

The rest of the General Council, it can safely be said, are as firmly opposed to revolution as Mr Chapple. But being marginally more intelligent than 'High Court' Frank, they realised that limited strike action was a better way to contain the potential of the rank and file than no action at all.

The strike, much to the relief of all concerned, did not take place. And so, from Friday to Wednesday, the mighty force of the leaders of the trade union movement had managed to meet together once and pass a resolution which they hoped they would not have to put into effect.

In six days they failed not just to shake the world but to make any meaningful contribution to the most crucial battle of the working class for a generation.



by TONY CLIFF

The high price of Prentice

IF IN the near future members of the Transport and General Workers' Union are looking around for ways of saving a bit of cash (and it seems quite likely they'll have to), then they might do worse than take a look at how much Reg Prentice is costing them.

Prentice, MP for East Ham North, is sponsored by the TGWU. He has held his seat since 1957, which you might think was long enough to become acquainted with the problems of his constituency, whose interest lies very much with the docks.

Yet his only contribution to the recent battle over the future of the docks, as MP and Labour's spokesman on employment, has been to side with the Tories. The Pentonville Five, he said on 21 June, 'have been looking for martyrdom for weeks. I have no sympathy with them and do not think they deserve the support of other workers.'

Surprising? Prentice has always been held by the press to be such a decent, humane, principled fellow, 'beloved by both sides of the house'. He was even once included (by Alan Watkins in the Daily Mirror) on a list of those who would have to resign from Wilson's government if Barbara Castle's White Paper on industrial relations were to contain penal clauses against the unions.

Dole queues

In fact Reginald Ernest Prentice has never been a champion of the working class or even political principle. The only thing he has championed is his good self.

For the seven years before he became MP he worked in the Transport and General research department. But by 1960 he was in conflict with his union's policy. That year the then general secretary Frank Cousins cast the union's massive block vote at the Labour Party Conference against the madness of the arms race and for unilateral disarmament.

Prentice was very worried about the bomb, describing it as 'perhaps one of the most perplexing problems ever to face the human race.' It was so perplexing that he supported the arms race: 'Apart from a few pacifists among us, we were elected on a policy of being prepared to defend our country.'

By 1962 Prentice was number 2 Labour Party spokesman on industrial affairs. His main desire was that industry should become more efficient—that is, the dole queues should become longer through productivity deals. His policy was to be put into practice by the 1964 Labour government.

After Labour came to power, Prentice became Minister of State for Education and Science. For some time he managed to cod people that big egalitarian changes were on the way.

Privilege

In January 1965 he was denounced by the Tories for announcing that 'the government intend to push ahead both with reorganisation of secondary education along comprehensive lines and with the integration of the public schools system into the state system of education.' One of the great bastions of privilege was under attack.

'We are pledged to integrate the public schools into the state system and we stand by that pledge,' said Prentice.

Six months later, in July 1965, Prentice had dumped his pledges. 'It is not our intention to remove the private sector in education,' he said. Far be it from him to stop the rich buying the right kind of schooling for their kids.

But it was during his spell as Minister for Overseas Development that his true colours came to the fore when he was attacked for supporting an increase in overseas aid.

Prentice was always crystal clear on the reasoning behind such aid. It was given not out of a sense of moral concern. Aid was a sound investment. When aid was £200 million a year, £60 million was coming back in the form of interest.

And, he disclosed, two thirds of all aid was in the form of surplus British food.

It will be interesting to see if the TGWU continues to fund his election campaigns and more interesting still to see if the union campaigns for his expulsion from the Labour Party. After all, he is what is politely termed a blackleg.

JAMES FENTON

Report on safety says leave it to the bosses...

WHEN a government wants to put a smoke screen round a serious problem, the best way to do it is to set up a 'committee of inquiry'. In recent months the Maudling scandal and the British Army murders in Derry have both been dampened down in this way.

It is two years now since the last Labour government hived off the little known but acute industrial safety crisis into the hands of a committee led by that highly qualified gentleman Lord Robens, the ex-Coal Board boss. The report of this committee was published two weeks ago, made the newspapers for one day, and then within 24 hours sunk into the oblivion for which it was surely intended.

The only thing of note in the report is the allegedly new approach it calls for. This would involve much less reliance on law enforcement in industry and much more on prompting employers to carry out their 'obligations' to safeguard their workers.

Whether any government will trouble itself to translate the detailed Robens recommendations into practice is highly questionable. For the situation as it works very nicely for the employers.

Few firms are brought to trial or fined for negligence even though the rate of accidents is on the increase. If legal obligations can be flouted, why bother to get rid of them.

What is outrageous about the report is the whole theory of the 'human face' of industry and the silver-tongued treatment of big business, factory inspectorate and trade union performance in this field.

Identity

The Robens Report states that industrial safety is 'mainly a matter of individual attitudes'.

The first thing about a factory is that it is not a collection of individuals. Work is highly organised in order to extract as much surplus as possible from the workers' production.

This situation of conflict and struggle is explicitly recognised by a recent research study into the Factory Inspectorate published by the august and respectable Law Commission.

'The factories legislation imposes a serious limitation on the freedom of manufacturers to conduct their business on the most economic lines,' the report said.

The Robens Committee sets even such respectable evidence aside. Instead we are told there is a closer identity of interest between employers and workers on industrial health and safety than on any other question.

The exact opposite is the case—in no other field is the antagonism of interests so obvious.

In this context, it is not surprising that the Robens Committee puts the vast majority of industrial accidents down to 'apathy'.

Pitiful

Probably no industry in Britain is as badly organised and dangerous as construction. But what happens when 'apathetic' construction workers take up the safety issue?

Do the employers jump for joy? Far from it, they run for cover behind a convenient procedure agreement.

They will not tolerate independent site safety committees and, on site after site, have tried to smash them.

The way this and any other industry conducts itself flows from the competitive system. And competition is tough in construction.

When a contractor is trying to get his bid price down, one of the first things that is trimmed back is the already pitiful amount of money

Robens' big cover-up for factory death toll

allocated for safety.

And even if the contract is won on some price-fixing basis (a not uncommon occurrence) then the drive is on to boost profit figures by cheapjack working practices. The current economic situation accentuates this.

The process should not be unknown to Lord Robens. Under his 'modernisation' of the mines, the accidents per shift rate in the industry doubled.

The Robens Committee's quite scandalous betrayal of the facts is clearest in its discussion of the Factory Inspectorate system. The report recommends certain organisational changes for the various inspecting bodies, but does nothing to probe the crisis the organisations are in.

Falsify

They are near total collapse as an enforcement agency. The declared practice and philosophy is one of advice and co-operation, making it easy on the employer.

The fruits of this approach became widely known in the recent Central Asbestos case where the injured and dying workmen would have had a sound case for suing the Factory Inspectorate for negligence as well as the employer.

But Robens and his assistants do not only wholeheartedly endorse the



An injured worker is helped away from an Aberdeen building site in 1970 when a six-storey building collapsed, killing five men. The construction industry has an appalling safety record—but the Robens' proposals will weaken legal sanctions against the profit-hungry bosses.



Robens: expert on 'modernisation'

chumming-up-to-employers approach of the Inspectorate, they also falsify history in the process.

The report quotes with approval a 1911 statement of the Chief Inspector of Factories declaring the value of co-operation. The Robens Committee records its belief that the same holds true today.

What they forget to mention is that the 1927 report of a subsequent chief inspector admitted the total failure of the voluntary approach and called for the setting-up of workplace safety committees.

A draft schedule was put out at the time, and was effectively sabotaged by the employers. With the trade unions defeated in the 1926 General Strike, there was no need even to consult them. The employers continue to resist this elementary measure with the same toughness to-

day. The Robens Report is at its most devious when it is talking of the possibility that industry may now be entering a period where there will be a significant increase in the range and implications of work hazards.

There is no 'perhaps' about it. That situation is here, with the fantastic increase in the use of totally uncontrolled chemicals. In 20 years we will begin to hear about its victims.

Maimed

We should not expect anything different from a government report. It is now nearly 10 years since the two eminent labour lawyers, Brian and Robin Thompson, wrote of the hypocrisy of industrial safety and the committees set up to kid its victims that it is doing something about the problem.

The Robens Report is already in the vast government waste-paper basket reserved for such findings. Meanwhile 500 workers will be killed this year, thousands more hurt and maimed for life.

A grave responsibility falls on the trade unions to stir themselves to take tough action to force adequate safety measures on the bosses. Hurting their profits is the only way to stop them hurting our lives.

ARTHUR MALONE



From page 5

Cogs of the working class movement

exceptions to any rules governing the way it works.

As against this long period from the First World War to the middle 60s, the last few years has seen great volatility in the movement. To take only a couple of examples.

The defeat of the postmen led to the same or lower wage settlements involving millions of workers. 1971 was a year of declining wages all round, with important exceptions. Then came the miners' victory and following it the railwaymen's. A fantastic zig zag!

The volatility is even clearer in the case of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Bill. On 8 December 1970, half a million workers came out on strike against the Industrial Relations Bill. The struggle rose.

On 21 February 1971, 140,000 workers demonstrated against the Bill. There must have been many hundreds of thousands if not millions that identified themselves with these demonstrations in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and so on.

Slogan

On 1 March 1½ million workers came out on official strike against the Bill. On 18 March a similar number came out again. On that day the TUC made it clear they were not ready to give a lead in the general struggle against the Bill. The result? There was an immediate 180 degree turn.

The militants' slogan now was 'Stop the Retreat'. From an offensive posture they turned to a defensive one. This volatility affects largely the advanced sections of the working class. It is rooted in (1) the feeling of the militant that quite often he cannot carry the majority of his own workmates with him, and (2) his isolation from militants in other places of work and even more, in other industries.

Three Cog Wheels: The trade union movement with 11 million members and 250,000 shop stewards is a powerful cog, with far the strongest shop organisation of the working class anywhere in the world.

Let's assume that we had in this country a revolutionary socialist party, a combat organisation, steered in struggle and schooled in the art of strategy and tactics for the overthrow of capitalism. Let's assume that we, the International Socialists, who are building such an organisation, had 50,000 members.

Issues

There is no question that this would indeed be a powerful cog wheel. However, one cog wheel of this size could not have moved the cog wheel of 11 million. If it tried it would only break its cogs. A connecting cog wheel is necessary between the two.

This is the organisation of militants in different unions and industries who work together round specific issues, issues wider than those affecting a small group of workers in one place of work and not going as far as to aim at a complete emancipation of the working class by the overthrow of the capitalist system.

IS members participate in building such a cog wheel in the form of rank and file organisations round papers like The Carworker, The Collier and Rank and File Teacher. The aim of these is to influence the policies of the trade unions.

The rising conflict will disclose to workers the magnitude of the struggle, will widen their horizons and will help to clarify their ideas. It is very important for members of IS to do their best to recruit militants into our political organisation as well as to strengthen all existing rank and file industrial and trade union organisations.

Generalise the struggle: One of the main strengths of the dockers' five days' struggle was the clear unity bet-

ween the particular life and death interest of the docker protecting his livelihood and the general interest of the working class to break the yoke of the Industrial Relations Act.

In the coming stage of the dockers' struggle, this unity has to be preserved. There is no doubt that the media, television and the press, that serves big business, will do their best to show the dockers' struggle as a struggle of one group of workers in their own selfish interests against other workers.

It is extremely important that the dockers make it absolutely clear that their struggle is a struggle for the right to work. Now more than ever it is important to have leaflets and posters by the thousands putting this case.

It is important that dockers themselves should go around factories, power stations, mines and so on and put this case clearly forward. One live docker can make more effective propaganda for the truth than a thousand copies of the Daily Express.

In the new stage the question of generalisation rises in another way. During the five days' struggle the rank and file showed itself in all its glory while the trade union bureaucracy, including Jack Jones, showed their complete bankruptcy. Now that the dockers' strike is official, the danger is that those bankrupt full-time officials will take over the running of the strike.

It is even more important now that the joint Port Shop Stewards' Committee is central in actively running the strike, in publicising the issues and in developing the strategy and tactics of the struggle.

Picketing

The question of generalisation arises also in yet another way. The Tory press is arguing that a docks strike can go on for a long time without damaging the economy, that is, big business. To some extent it is whistling in the dark.

However, the experience of 1970 with a 2½ weeks docks strike makes it clear that to spread the struggle is important. A docks strike affects exports but it also affects imports.

When the miners' strike started, the Tory press was confident that the government would win because it assumed that the miners would simply picket the mines. But the rank and file miners were 100 per cent right when they showed their initiative in picketing the power stations. This is a lesson that the dockers should not overlook.

The question of generalisation of the struggle also raises a question of new institutions created in struggle. In the short five days struggle very close relations were created between the dockers and the printers in Fleet Street. It is important that those close relations continue.

It won't be amiss if the printers refuse to print particularly obnoxious attacks on the dockers. After all, we are told we live in a free, democratic country and if six owners of the press have a right to dictate what is being published in their papers, why shouldn't the printers also have some say?

In the five days of struggle the embryo of a Council of Action connecting dockers and printers and other workers was in the making. In new, more prolonged, wider struggles the question of a Council of Action will really come to the fore.

The last point in terms of generalisation: Episodic struggles are very prone to accidents. Their outcome depends on the relation of forces in every specific situation.

Because the ruling class is highly centralised, its ability to manoeuvre is much greater than any individual section of the working class.

Therefore the need for a revolutionary party, to repeat, as a school of strategy and tactics, and at the same time an active combat organisation, will become more vital than ever.

NATIONAL UNION OF BANK EMPLOYEES,
Queens House,
2 Holly Road,
TWICKENHAM,
Middlesex.

27th July 1972.

TRADES UNION CONGRESS AND THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT.

The T.U.C. were recommending unions to call a 1-day national stoppage on Monday, 31st July 1972, in connection with the imprisonment of 5 dockers at Pentonville Prison for contempt of court, and it is understood that the T.U.C. General Council are meeting today, 27th July, to decide whether to proceed with their recommendation now that the 5 dockers have been released from prison.

N.U.B.E. wishes to emphasise that the offence for which the 5 dockers were imprisoned arose out of contempt of court and we do not believe that this should be used as a justification for industrial action.

Accordingly, N.U.B.E. will not be participating in any 1-day national stoppage that might be recommended by the T.U.C. and we ask all members to continue normal working.

N.U.B.E. is a registered trade union under the Industrial Relations Act 1971, and believes that trade unions should utilise those parts of the Act which it is in the interest of members so to do. We shall be seeking to get the T.U.C. to adopt this view at the forthcoming Congress in September. In the meantime, industrial action against the elected Government or the Judiciary - or its decisions - is not considered by us to assist in the development of responsible and progressive industrial relations in this country.

L.A. MILLS
GENERAL SECRETARY.

The letter sent to the union's branches

Tenants' conference votes for action

MORE than 300 delegates voted overwhelmingly on Saturday for militant action as the only way to defeat the Tories' rent Act.

Speaker after speaker at a special conference in London, attended by delegates of 100 tenants associations and trades councils, union branches and Labour council groups, pointed out the inequities of the Act. Many contrasted the behaviour of Labour councils in submitting to the rent Act with the success of the dockers in defying the Industrial Relations Act.

Even Frank Allaun MP, who opened the conference, said that if Labour councils refused to implement the Act they could make it unworkable—though he hastened to add that the Labour Party executive, which he officially represented, thought otherwise.

He urged delegates not to be hostile to councils that did put up rents following the Act. 'I appeal to you not to regard people who differ from you as traitors.'

Other delegates were not so keen to maintain a spurious 'unity' and expressed disgust that councillors elected with working-class votes could implement such an anti-working class measure.

A representative of Oldham tenants said: 'We need unity all right. Not with the Labour right-wing who implement the rises, but with the trade unions to reject them.'

Bob Wright, as official representative of the Engineering Union, said that if the courts attacked anyone under the rent Act, 'I hope we will equally respond as we did to the arrest of the dockers last week.'

The organisers of the conference presented a declaration stressing the need to oppose the Act. But the text did not give any clear lead as to what form this opposition should take. A number of delegates suggested amendments urging a national withholding of the rent increase,

THE RENTS BATTLE

a national rent strike if efforts were made to evict anyone, and national industrial action to back the tenants.

The Chairman of the conference, John Evans of NATR at first refused to accept amendments. But when the matter was put to the vote, the amendments were all passed with very little opposition. However, the attitude of the organisers did seem to many of the more militant delegates to indicate that NATR itself was unlikely to take the national initiative necessary to organise effective action.

HALIFAX: Tenants formed a hostile and noisy picket lining roads outside the town hall when Julian Amery, the Housing Minister, visited the town's 'slum improvement' area on Monday.

An appeal to councillors to boycott the visit was rejected—only one Labour councillor has publicly pledged himself against the Act.

In areas visited by Amery, the authorities tried to prevent children playing outside their homes, and weeds between the paving stones were pulled up at public expense.

SALFORD: The Labour group which controls the council has voted not to implement the rents Act after pressure from local tenants associations.

LONDON: Greenwich Council has gone back on its pledge not to implement the rent rises, by 32 votes to 28.

WOMEN WIN EQUAL PAY RISE

HAVANT, Hants: Workers at Goodmans Loudspeakers, part of the Thorn empire, have won their demand for an equal cost of living rise for men and women. Originally management offered £2 for the women, £2.75 for semi-skilled men and £3 for skilled men.

A mass meeting voted to take strike action to get £3 for everyone. Goodmans had never had a strike before. Most of the factory's workers are women, and only 100 of the workforce of over 600 were members of a union (AUEW) at the start of the strike. So management just sat tight.

But two weeks later the management was forced to agree to the demands. During the strike union membership went up to 350, women manned the picket line 24 hours a day and local factories were leafleted to get support.

The Thorn Shop Stewards Combine Committee—started by the Fisher Bendix stewards at Kirkby, near Liverpool—was contacted and backing arranged.

Union orders members to scab

DON'T STRIKE: Ignore the TUC. That was the order that went out from the leaders of the Bank Employees' Union last week after the TUC called the one-day strike to free the five jailed dockers.

Members of NUBE, which is affiliated to the TUC, received a letter which said: 'NUBE will not be participating in any one-day national stoppage... we ask all members to continue normal working.' It was signed by L A Mills, the union's general secretary.

The union, which has 85,000 members, is still on the

Register of Trade Unions set up under the Industrial Relations Act and wants the TUC to co-operate with the Act.

The letter goes on to say that the jailing of the dockers should not be used as justification for industrial action. 'Industrial action against the elected government or the judiciary—or its decisions—is not considered by us to assist in the development of responsible and progressive industrial relations.'

The employees of at least one London bank are angry at the letter. Several months ago they tried to leave NUBE to join a union that would fight to improve their working conditions—but they were told they could not do this because of the TUC's Bridlington Agreement.

Clearly the bank union leaders want to gain from membership of the TUC while ignoring its decisions. Such scandalous behaviour reinforces the demand that the TUC expel unions that register under the Act and so remove them from the protection of the Bridlington Agreement.

The confused

GLASGOW: The weaknesses of the West of Scotland Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions were revealed last week when it reacted to the jailing of the Pentonville Five with confusion.

At two meetings it stalled on a call for immediate strike action—though it had already been given a mandate for such action by a meeting of 500 stewards a month ago. Eventually the committee endorsed the Scottish TUC's call for a one-day strike last Monday.

But the confusion continued after this stoppage had been called off—for factories affiliated to the liaison committee did not know whether its strike was on or not. Some stopped while others worked on.

If the committee is to play a role in defending trade unionists, then it must give a clear and early lead. It failed last week.

The clear

HULL: The recently formed Hull and district Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions really proved its worth when the five dockers were jailed. A meeting of 500 shop stewards and trade unionists called for a total stoppage area until the five were freed. A telegram to the TUC called for a recall congress and a general strike to bring down the government.

The author of last week's interview with Hull docks shop steward Walter Cunningham was incorrectly named as Keith Bell. The name we should have given was Keith Jackson.

WHAT'S ON

Copy for What's On must arrive by first post Monday or be phoned Monday morning. Charges are 5p per line, semi-display 10p per line. CASH WITH COPY. No insertions without payment. Invoices cannot be sent.

MEETINGS

LEICESTER IS public meeting
THE FIGHT AGAINST THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT
Speaker: Tony Cliff
Wednesday 9 August, 7.30pm
Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate.

AUGUST 1972 INTERNET PLUS EFFECTIVE MARTIAL LAW
Anti Internment League mass meeting on the prospects for the struggle in Ireland in the coming year.
Wednesday 9 August, 8pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London (nearest tube Holborn)
Speakers: Bowes Egan (AIL chairman) John Gray (AIL national organiser) Frank McManus (MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone).
Also an exhibition of photographs, news reports etc.

HALIFAX IS public meeting: 7.30pm Thursday 10 August. Tony Cliff: 'Kick out the Tories!', Griffin Hotel, George Square.

NOTICES

TWO COMRADES moving to Manchester/Bolton area in early September would like to share flat/house with other comrades for next year (or longer). Please phone 061-980-2335 (c/o Palmer).

YOUNG SOCIALIST requires accommodation in Islington, Highbury, Hackney, Highgate or Hampstead areas of London. Please write to Box ES, Socialist Worker, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

J T MURPHY: Preparing for power—clean copy required for cash. Contact Pluto Press, Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1. Phone 01-722-0141.

Woman's Voice, No 1. Copies still available from Margaret Renn, 90 Mountview Road, London N4. 5p a copy, post free.



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Socialist Worker

Jobs stolen from dockers

from Diana Parkin and David Gibbens, in Whitstable

NOWHERE is the callous theft of dockers' jobs more clearly exposed than in the Whitstable docks, in Kent. Westlands Importers, a firm that sacked all its registered dockers three years ago, is today doing more work than ever. It does dockers' work right in the heart of the port with non-registered and non-union labour.

Westlands' large-scale operations began three years ago when Whitstable Urban Council spent £250,000 on a new wharf in the municipally-owned harbour aiming to double the capacity of the port.

Westlands took a 30-year lease on the new wharf, shut its shipping operations and sacked its 22 registered dockers.

The 17 registered dockers who were left in Whitstable docks then saw Westlands speedily reopen on the new wharf. For two years now they have been on short-time working while non-union, non-registered workers do their and their sacked mates' work for cheap rates.

Westlands doesn't just use its own lorries to do the container work which comes from the continent through the

roll on, roll off so-called 'free port' of Dover. It has an agreement with some of the cowboy haulage firms that have mushroomed in recent years and with an outfit called Francis Davis. This firm got itself a bad name in the Kent area for crossing picket lines during the miners' strike.

Clearly the 17 registered dockers who remain cannot fight the battle on their own. They need massive support from both the dockers in the big ports from which work is being transferred and from other trade unionists.

NOW BUILDERS CALL FOR TOTAL STRIKE

IT SHOULD now be clear to all building workers that the only way to win the full £30 for 35 hours claim is by a total stoppage of all building work in Britain.

A meeting between unions and employers last Friday produced an offer that was little more than a rearrangement of a previous offer. The offer basically was an increase in the craftsman's basic rate from £20 to £23 immediately, with a further £2 next June. Bonus guarantees of £2 from December and a further £3 in October 1973 were also offered.

The two main unions concerned, UCATT and the Transport and General, said that they were unanimous in ruling the new offer totally unacceptable and they therefore decided it was necessary to escalate the campaign against the employers.

DEMANDS

The new paltry offer proves that the selective strike campaign was not hitting the employers where it hurts. What must now be done, in the words of Birmingham rank-and-file leader Pete Carter, is 'to put the boot in' with an all-out strike.

In some regions this is already happening. In Birmingham, by Tuesday this week there were 60 jobs on strike. At a rally last Saturday it was made clear once again that no site would return to work until the demands were met in full.

In Yorkshire the action committee has been given the go-ahead to close all sites in the region. They aim to do this by 14 August.

On Merseyside there was to be a meeting on Thursday at the Liverpool Football Club stadium where the question of an all-out stoppage was to be put. Similar action is expected in London soon.

SUCCESS

With the all-out stoppages, measures should be taken to ensure complete closure of the building trade. These include picketing of sites that do not respond to the call, brickyards, cement works and any other sources of building materials. The employers will not meet the full claim unless the building workers fight this struggle with their full strength.

BRISTOL:-The building workers' strike has really taken off during the past week and all construction work has been halted. This success is due to the tactic of the flying picket developed by the strikers who hold mass meetings to discuss the progress of the struggle and then go out as a mass to call out the sites.

All sites approached so far have come

by Gerry Kelly (UCATT)

out, including non-union sub-contracted labour and electricians. The support from the Transport Union has been better than UCATT, with immediate strike pay offered to all workers who strike and join the union. Hundreds of new trade unionists have been organised as a result.

LONDON:-Last Wednesday saw the most successful London building workers' demonstration for many years when more than 1500 building workers headed for Pentonville in solidarity with the jailed

dockers. Rank-and-file militants have been given credentials to assist full-time officials to enforce the overtime ban and mass pickets have successfully shut down several 'lump' sites defying the overtime ban.

SOUTHAMPTON:-The major sites in the city are now all shut down on strike—Tarmac, Higgs and Hill, Wimpey, Myton and Laing. But many workers are now firmly convinced of the need for all-out national action. Derek Shepherd, federation steward (convenor) on the Higgs and

Hill site, said: 'We are prepared to fight to the death for our union, UCATT. We feel that if we win this battle we will have established UCATT in the building industry and we can move on from strength to strength.'

LEEDS:-Every building site in the city shut down last Wednesday as 7000 building workers stopped for a token strike in support of the claim. 1500 marched and sang their way through the city centre to a mass rally outside the university union. Resolutions were passed for solidarity with the jailed dockers and for raising the building wage claim to £1 per hour.



MORE than 300 people attended a dockers' victory meeting called by East London IS in Stratford last Thursday. Our picture shows three London Docks shop stewards, Ray Halsey, Colin Ross and Tony Delaney on the platform with Tony Cliff, left, and Bob Light, the chairman, centre, from the International Socialists. The speaker is Tony Merrick (standing), one of the imprisoned Pentonville Five.

The day the British troops 'freed' Free Derry

from Eamonn McCann, Derry, Monday

THEY CAME, naturally, in the early hours of the morning, unceasing lines in convoy, Saladins, Centurions, Saracens, Whippets and Landrovers, grinding past the Rossville flats as the Provo siren wailed from the Creggan Heights.

Officers shouting orders, lights blazing, machinery screaming, a desultory rattle of gunfire. Groups of Provos and Officials watched and waited until the cacophony came nearer before vanishing into 'safe' houses.

No one in the area had gone to sleep. We all knew it was coming from the massive build-up of armour along the docks all Sunday. People watched through their windows until dawn, when the first women went out to indulge in what the press calls 'verbal abuse'.

But by 8am the streets were filled with people. In the Creggan the kids were already stoning and an early morning meeting of several hundred people was being addressed by a passionate Official standing precariously on the roof of a tin hut.

After a few hours contacts were being re-established. Men checked round that none of the 'lads' had been arrested. Only one republican volunteer had been detained, though an unarmed boy of 15, Daniel Hegarty, had been shot dead by a soldier just outside the front door of his own home.

On the radio Whitelaw was saying that the troops had come to protect us—a remark which caused the only genuine

mirth of the day.

The area was completely sealed off. There was no milk or bread. The schools in the Creggan had been taken over. Houses were occupied, sandbagged, and families forced to move out and stay with neighbours.

By 2pm the Official Republicans were distributing leaflets. 'We are neither disheartened nor defeated. Wait for the word. Forward to a socialist Ireland.'

A meeting at the Bogside Inn, a thousand strong, heard Bernadette Devlin

encouraging the people to 'Hold fast, keep calm, and keep the organisations intact.' A thousand clenched fists gave the answer.

On the local TV news at 6pm General Ford was saying that the troops had a 'generally friendly reception' and that the Royal Ulster Constabulary will soon be patrolling on foot. Some say that Ford believes this, but the consensus is: what else can he say?

Now people are watching and waiting, and preparing for what happens next.

Children used to unload fish

GRIMSBY:-Employers deliberately broke the law and took on child labour when fish porters came out on strike last week in sympathy with the jailed dockers. One lad of 10, walking off the docks at 5am, told a Socialist Worker reporter: 'I'm not coming any more. They made me stand among the fish down the hold and put it in baskets.'

He had been working since midnight, dressed in shoes and short trousers without any protective clothing, and was covered from head to toe in fish slime. The police

stood by watching while the ship was unloaded, even though it is quite illegal to employ children at night, or to employ them at all without a special licence.

The decks of trawlers are treacherous with slime, and anyone could slip and suffer a serious accident. Yet none of the casual workers taken on, young or old, had any insurance against industrial injury.

The press and TV—so concerned about the need to 'respect the law of the land' when it applies to trade unionists—hardly mentioned these illegal practices.

PICKET LINES

WOLVERHAMPTON:-Management at the Tarmac civil engineering depot, where the strike is in its eighth week, offered the men a £20 'gift' if they would go back to work. The strikers refused.

The strike is for a reduction in the working week from 45 to 40 hours, an increase in the basic rate and against a redundancy threat. The bosses have offered to suspend the redundancies for a month but will give nothing on the claims.

HARROW:-A resounding victory has been won by 260 members of SOGAT, the print union, at the Stationery Office Press warehouse. Management had attempted to take on non-union labour, quoting the 'free associations' clause of the Industrial Relations Act. Two days on strike and strong picketing were enough to force the withdrawal of the non-union labour.

FAWLEY, Hampshire:-A strike by all shop floor workers at International Synthetic Rubber over the laying off of eight operators is now in its fourth week. General and Municipal Union members in the factory are also battling to defeat a grading system which divides worker against worker.

This is the first official strike in the factory for 15 years, and there is unofficial support from members of the engineering and electricians' unions. It is a bitter and violent strike, with lorry drivers being paid £80 a day to break picket lines.

GOOLE:-Eight hundred construction workers at the Drax power station construction site have been locked out for 10 weeks in a dispute involving four major firms—Babcock and Wilcox, Yarrow, BSC and C A Parsons. The men had refused to work the bonus system after a miserable offer of a 2½p an hour increase.

LONDON:-After two years of patient campaigning night cleaners brought their pay battle to a head on Monday night by walking out of a 25-floor Ministry of Defence office block and throwing a 24-hour picket round the building. They have been promised the backing of the day-time clerical workers.

The women cleaners, unionised by members of the Cleaners' Action Group and Women's Liberation Workshop, want an extra £2 on their present £14 for 45 hours cleaning. They also want to halt the plans to cut down the workforce.

Support on the picket line, especially during the night, is urgently needed. Messages of support to c/o Andy Hollis, Civil Service Union, Empress State Building, Lillie Road, London SW8.

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