

WORKERS' FIGHT

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4p

SUPPORT Mansfield Hosiery strikers

RACE PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION exists in Britain, and on a very serious scale. Only people who go around with their eyes closed and their ears stuffed up will deny it. Black people have to live with it day in and day out.

This is common knowledge and will come as no surprise to most people. But that there has long been a system in a Loughborough factory akin to South Africa's Apartheid - that will surprise many.

At Mansfield Hosiery, near Loughborough, 500 Asian workers have been on strike against this system. Their strike has brought to the attention of the labour movement a factory whose labour force has been rigidly stratified according to the race of the workers. The higher paid knitting jobs are exclusively reserved for whites (wage £30 plus). Indian workers are restricted to largely unskilled work (wage £20 plus).

This has been, and is, deliberate Company policy undisguised and known to the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear workers, which - allegedly - defends the interests of all its worker members. In fact it has collaborated closely with the employers to maintain this system.

The strikers are demanding a £5 per week rise for bar loaders, and equal opportunity for the Asian workers to progress to the higher paid jobs now reserved for whites only. After weeks on strike in defiance of a do-nothing, gutless trade union leadership, which was heavily contaminated with racialism, the men occupied the union office.

After that the strike was hastily made official, on December 5th. Then the union led the men back to work, having gained a wage increase and, it appeared, agreement that the factory's 'Apartheid' system would end.

But, having returned to work, they found that 41 men had been hired and were being trained as knitters.

Far from equal opportunity now being theirs, the Asian workers were immediately put on short time - while all the whites, including the 41 trainees, were to continue working full time! So yet again the men walked out.

The strikers now demand that the 41 be transferred or suspended. Already there have been fights on the picket line between the scab workers and the strikers. And the Government has set up an inquiry into the affair.

An inquiry - yes! But what is this rotten Government to set up an inquiry - this Government whose recent anti-immigration laws set the tone for every race-baiter and filth monger; this government which protects the interests of scab-herding racials such as the Mansfield Hosiery bosses.

No. The working class, whose militants, white, black and brown, are fighting this disgusting Government, must inquire - and inquire

contd. back page

"No racial discrimination!

No scabbing!

WE ARE ALL WORKERS"



A.U.E.W. FINES

PREPARE NATIONAL STRIKE NOW

NOW IT'S £50,000! THAT'S THE AMOUNT OF THE FINE IMPOSED ON the A.U.E.W. by the National Industrial Relations Court on 8th December. Mr. James Goad, a Tory and a former Baptist preacher, presently a quality controller at CAV Sudbury, went to the NIRC demanding his 'rights' under

WORKERS IGNORE FREEZE

ON 1ST DECEMBER, THE freeze officially came into force - and the Government immediately took action to stop pay and holiday deals for some 750 000 workers, including farm labourers, Scottish dressmakers, laundry-women, and retail food employees. Meanwhile, out of 20 000 complaints on price increases, just 60 have brought any results.

Unless and until this freeze is totally smashed, the people it will hit hardest are the less well organised and, usually, lower paid workers. Many better organised workers are treating the freeze with contempt. For wage increases in private industry, the government relies on employers to notify them before they apply the freeze, and there is no doubt that both employers and government will be prepared to turn a blind eye to increases granted to powerful sections of workers.

But most of the workers affected by the government's action of 1 December rank among the lower-paid. Only if the better organised sections can totally and openly



Oh my Goad! It's that scab again..

smash the freeze will the weaker sections feel confident to outface the government.

Already many workers have acted against the freeze. At Caledon shipyard, Dundee, 250 finishing trade workers struck on 4 December for an increase stopped by the freeze. Hospital workers will be striking on 13 December. The print union NATSOPA has decided nationally to ignore the freeze, and Ford workers, water supply industry manual workers, and London dockers have all put in claims in contradiction to the freeze.

Meanwhile further contempt proceedings are to be brought in the National Industrial Relations Court against the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, for refusing to admit a scab to membership, and may result in further massive fines.

This seizure of union funds, and the use to which the Industrial Relations Act could be put in wage battles against the freeze, once again bring to the fore the need to smash the Act - and the government which spawned it.

the Act that every boy called, from the start, a "scab's charter" And how that title suits this man Goad!

He has not only more than once fallen into sufficient arrears to be lapsed by his branch, he has scabbed on a strike.

This is the kind of "trade unionist" the Tories' law was designed to protect - the scab and the crawler.

After their principled refusal to recognise the NIRC under any circumstances, the AUEW is continuing its intransigence. And every trade unionist must give them complete support so long as this is the case.

Union branches have also taken a stand. Chatham and Erith district committee have called for industrial action if more than the initial fine (of £5000 and £1000 costs) is imposed. The same resolution was passed at the mid-Lanark shop stewards' quarterly, and at the Guildford and Farnborough shop stewards' quarterly. Calls on the TUC for support have come from many workers' organisations including the Heathrow Airport shop stewards' consultative committee.

On Teesside the Redcar no. 2 branch of the AUEW resolved that "This branch fully supports the Executive Council in their stand against the NIRC. We also see the need to protect the union funds and benefits due to our members. We are, therefore, withdrawing our branch funds in preparation for a fight against further sequestration of national funds by the government".

This branch is providing the union with protection; it is arming itself for the fight against the Tory marauders; and it places a firm weight of rank-and-file pressure behind an intransigent stand

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LACKENBY:

WHY THEY WENT BACK

On Wednesday 6 December a mass meeting of strikers from the giant Teesside steelworks at Lackenby met at the Coatham Hotel, Redcar, and decided by two to one to return to work.

1200 men went on strike when one shift was taken off pay after they had blacked a section of the works because of a dispute arising out of the work to rule situation.

This work to rule had been imposed to support a claim for parity with brothers in South Wales whose pay is £8 per week more for jobs of a similar nature. The Lackenby men understood that the parity claim should be taken up by all steelworkers who at present, in a so-called nationalised industry are still divided by wages, conditions, and unions.

The return to work decided on Wednesday is a real setback. The Lackenby men are going back with no meaningful change in the situation to their advantage. But they are going back understanding that there is a very real danger of the struggle being squashed flat under the lead-weight of protracted national negotiations.

The failure at Lackenby could be blamed on a lack of support from other sections of the steel industry in the Teesside area. Or on the right-wing trade union officials like Jim Drinkwater whose only work in the strike seemed to be giving reports to the local paper of 'reds under the bed' (or wherever else Drinkwater was when there was work to be done).

I am sure that the International Socialists will give these reasons, to cover up for strike-leader Arthur Affleck, an I.S. member, but I for one do not go along with them. They are excuses and typical of quite un-revolutionary thinking — blaming the mass of the workers without looking to see how the Marxist revolutionaries could have affected the situation and why they didn't.

(Incidentally, the reason I can say this without fear that the mass

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AUEW FINES

by the Executive. It is calling on other branches to follow it.

The establishment press tirelessly points out that 'justice' is on the side of the AUEW and that that is why they should go to the court and prove itself in the right. Absolute refusal to go before the NIRC or to accept its judgments as well as commitment to fight back is the only correct course.

Meanwhile the workers at CAV Sudbury have taken matters into their own hands and, on the threat of industrial action, demanded that CAV get rid of Goad. CAV has put him on leave with pay at present — a situation which seems

media or the trade union officials will "investigate" the political affiliations of strike leader Arthur Affleck is because when being interviewed by local press and radio Arthur said that much about IS he hardly had time to mention the strike issue.)

Arthur Affleck is a prominent and leading member of the IS branch on Teesside — a branch which includes other workers at Lackenby. IS must therefore take some responsibility for the following events.

The parity claim was put to the management after it had been discussed by Affleck's union branch (Lackenby 5 branch of BISAKTA). The branch, however, had a very poor attendance of about 15 at the time and so the majority of the members were not involved. The claim was presented by no. 5 branch alone, presenting the other branches with a fait accompli, instead of making it a Lackenby-wide claim.

If workers heard about it, it was by paying 2p for a copy of the claim printed by IS on behalf of the BISAKTA stewards. These copies were distributed by various IS comrades and contacts. But when approached by comrades with contacts in other steelworks, IS refused their help and so damped down any attempt to spread the claim.

After management's first refusal, Affleck called a branch meeting, which, due to bad communications, drew an attendance of only 50 to 60. The meeting decided that the production workers should go on a work to rule. The maintenance grades (the branch consists of about 1000 production and 200 maintenance workers) were not asked to do likewise and they were not covered by the claim! But the maintenance grades at a shop floor meeting volunteered to support the claim with a work to rule all the same.

It was this which led in fact to the strike, when a rigger refused to do a double shift and management did the job themselves so causing the whole section to be blacked.

This solidarity was a good omen for the strike and the first meeting — addressed by Drinkwater on the Sunday — seemed to confirm this by rejecting any notion of going back.

The trouble is that there was no mass meeting to follow that — until the fateful Coatham Hotel meeting. Not only that but there was no strike committee or strike fund. There was a time when IS's paper Socialist Worker would call for such obvious elements of strike organisation when the workers had done them already. Now IS is in a leading position in a strike and we hear no word of this good advice.

When I approached Arthur, who is chairman of the joint shop stewards committee, regarding the call to have prompted this self-styled "man of principle" to say that he'll shut up for £30,000. Another "Official Solicitor"-type act? Is an "anonymous donor" in sight?

But the AUEW cannot rest content with paying out £56,000 and playing the martyr. Militants should organise immediate strike action against this further seizure of union funds. If they can seize our funds, we can seize their factories!

Now we have another chance to decisively crack the Act, to go on the offensive, to go forward from protest action against the fine to a general strike to smash the Act. We shouldn't let the Tories wriggle out of the noose they have soaped for themselves.

ing of a meeting of that committee he turned the idea down.

Indeed, preparations in the strike were so poor that there was — apart from a token picket of a handful of men on one day — no direct call for pickets until the Wednesday — and then at the tail-end of Affleck's speech recommending a return to work! After all, he admitted, if the strike were to continue the workers would need pickets.

Now of course there are times when even the most revolutionary militants are right to sound a retreat. But this was not one. In fact, Affleck didn't know himself that that was what he was going to recommend until he got to the meeting. As he said to another IS steelworker beforehand, he would "feel the mood of the meeting", and make a recommendation accordingly to that.

Of course, saying you are a revolutionary is not a high-flown way of saying you believe in spitting in the wind. But if what was in question was the "mood of the meeting", then it is the duty of the revolutionary, particularly when he is in the leadership of a strike, to try to change that mood. I believe — and I know that many others think this — that if Affleck had recommended

staying out this might have made the difference. After all, although there were about 200 250 more voting to return there were about 300 abstentions!

And obviously the "mood" was partly determined by the lack of real preparation and mass involvement prior to that meeting.

IS must shoulder a large part of the blame for the collapse of the strike. As they said in a recent issue of Socialist Worker (25 November) "The first big challenge to the Tory government's latest attempt to hold down wages looks like coming from Teesside steelworkers". The bigger the challenge, the bigger the blame for not showing even efficient trade union level leadership, let alone anything more!

Now that the strike has collapsed what will their excuses be?

P.S. At an IS meeting on Thursday night, with Arthur Affleck and IS national leader Tony Cliff speaking, I put these points to Arthur. He replied: "Duffy apparently wants to be political on every point".

Exactly, bro. Affleck — on every point!

TONY DUFFY
(AUEW steward, beam mill, Lackenby)

HEALTH WORKERS DECIDE FOR NATIONAL ALLIANCE

A tremendous boost has been given to the hospital workers' fight for a decent standard of living and a really militant union. On Sunday 3rd December LASH (London Alliance of stewards in Health) sponsored the first major national conference of rank and file NHS workers. Representatives from Liverpool, Manchester, Mansfield, Canterbury, Leeds, and Bradford took part as well as from London and the surrounding areas.

It was decided that rank and file organisation was the surest way of ensuring fully functioning militant unions, and a campaign should be mounted to set up alliances similar to LASH in other parts of the country.

A National Secretary was elected to coordinate all the local groups. This was Jack Sutton, a NUPE branch secretary from Manchester and a Workers Fight member.

A national rank and file paper for health workers will be produced as soon as a further national conference has been called to elect an editorial board.

It was widely felt in the meeting that although the unions had their noses pointing in the right direction, they weren't following their noses very far. As a token of this feeling the meeting called for an

extension of the official stoppage on the 13th December to a full day strike.

Nothing shows up the hypocritical outpourings of the Tories who claim to want to "help the lower paid" more than the fact that they have frozen hospital workers' wages. These workers are among the lowest paid in the country. Far from being able to rely on the party of the rich, the Tories, they need to increase their independence from these enemies of the working class and those elements in the unions that collaborate with them. This is the genuine response of militant workers, of workers who really want to fight for their interests.

The wave of militancy sweeping through the ranks of NHS workers needs to find an organisation capable of taking it forward. This organisation has been found in the LASH-type alliances to be set up round the country. Every hospital worker should get in touch with the National Secretary coordinating these alliances, Jack Sutton, and help create a real national structure capable of pressing the demands of the rank and file.

Write to Jack Sutton, 5 Moorton Park, Moorton Ave, Manchester 19; or for information about LASH to: Mark Palmer, 122 Sinclair Rd, London W14.



Moscow and Peking's

role in VIETNAM 1971-72

Reprinted from MILITANT, weekly paper of the Socialist Workers Party of the USA

By DICK ROBERTS

"Examine your hands closely, Mr. Brezhnev; the stigma of Mylai may be on them, and of Con Son, and of the piecemeal, methodical destruction of the cities of Vietnam. Even the children? The children also."

This is part of Daniel Berrigan's open letter to Leonid Brezhnev published in the Oct. 5 *Village Voice*. Reflecting the feelings of many supporters of the Vietnamese revolution, Berrigan condemned Brezhnev for meeting President Nixon at the height of U.S. slaughter of North Vietnam last May.

An attempt to answer Berrigan appeared in the Nov. 18 *Daily World*, voice of the American Communist Party. "Concretely," Michael Myerson told Berrigan, "... you shake hands with Richard Nixon." Defending Moscow Myerson declared, "the people Brezhnev represents are the main force trying to save Vietnam (outside of the Vietnamese themselves)." Myerson spoke of "the enormous aid rendered Indochina by the socialist countries."

What are the facts?

Military aid

Far from being "enormous" as Myerson asserts, the military aid Moscow provides Hanoi is insufficient to protect Vietnam from Washington's bombers. It is not that Moscow lacks the weapons.

William Beecher, reporting from Washington in the Nov. 12 *New York Times*, states that U.S. intelligence believes Moscow is providing its most advanced surface-to-air missiles to Egypt. "The new missile reportedly sent to Egypt is the SA-6, the best low-altitude, mobile surface-to-air missile system in the Soviet arsenal," Beecher writes.

Whether this will provide Egypt with sufficient strength to deter an attack by Israel, we do not know. Certainly Egypt and the rest of the Arab world need such protection.

But Vietnam is being bombed right now, and it has been for the last seven years. U.S. military authorities believe that the anti-aircraft guns supplied to Hanoi are "obsolete," the *New York Times* stated Aug. 20. "While Soviet technology is understood to have kept pace with the passing years," the *Times* continued, "relatively few Soviet anti-aircraft innovations seem to have been passed on to Hanoi. By all indications, the Russians have been far more helpful to Arab defenses against the Israeli Air Force than they have to the North Vietnamese."

A comparable description of ground weapons appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, May 3. "... American officers have long been puzzled that the Soviet Union did not use the Vietnam war to test some of its equipment," George McArthur wrote from Saigon.

"The fact that most Russian equipment was standard hardware was also known to cause some chagrin in the North Vietnamese military establishment."



Peking summit, February. Nixon and Chou

"Even the massive supply of tanks from Moscow did not alter that policy substantially. The tanks were also mostly of World War II vintage."

Measured in dollars, Moscow's military aid to Hanoi is less than one-tenth of its foreign military aid, according to U.S. intelligence sources. In 1971 the total military aid to less-developed countries from the Soviet Union came to \$1.1-billion. "... Soviet military aid to North Vietnam was estimated at only \$100-million," Tad Szulc wrote in the Nov. 19 *New York Times*.

"One-third of Soviet military aid last year, about \$350-million, went to Egypt. ..."

"Iraq was the second largest recipient of Soviet military aid in 1971, followed by India, which fought her victorious war against Pakistan late last year. ... Thus, measured financially, Egypt, Iraq, and India received more military aid from Moscow than North Vietnam. It is clear from this that Moscow limits its military aid to Hanoi."

Peking's military capabilities are undoubtedly inferior to Moscow's and consequently the main responsibility for providing an adequate defense to Hanoi falls on Mos-



Moscow summit, May. Nixon and Brezhnev

cow's shoulders. Nevertheless Peking follows the same policy of curtailing military aid to North Vietnam. Szulc reported that Peking's military aid to Hanoi in 1970 was worth \$85-million and in 1971, \$75-million.

President Nixon began to escalate the air war in Vietnam in late 1971. On Dec. 26, for the first time since 1968, U.S. bombers struck North Vietnam. The attack lasted five days and included 1,000 sorties. Nixon made it clear in an interview with CBS correspondent Dan Rather Jan. 2 that the purpose of stepping up the air war was to force Hanoi to recognize the Saigon regime.

On Jan. 25, Nixon issued his "eight-point plan" for a cease-fire based on the continued existence of the Saigon government. The speech ominously warned that Washington would resume full-scale bombing of North Vietnam if the insurgents refused to accept these conditions.

From then on Washington stepped up the bombing of North and South Vietnam week by week. On Feb. 14 the bombing of South Vietnam had reached the highest levels of the war, exceeding the peaks of 1968 and 1969. One week later Chou En-lai greeted Nixon in Peking.

The timing of this trip was not a coincidence. Nixon's Peking and Moscow summit meetings were carefully planned to coincide with the U.S. escalation of the war, to test Peking's and Moscow's response to this escalation, and to exert pressure on Hanoi to capitulate to Washington's demands.

As U.S. fighter-bombers smashed away at cities, towns, and villages in North Vietnam, Chou clinked glasses with Nixon in the "Great Hall of the People." This was a demoralizing blow to the Vietnamese revolution.

U.S. planes dropped millions of leaflets on the countryside and battlefields of Vietnam with the photograph of Nixon and Mao shaking hands. Hanoi officials did not disguise their bitterness. "While Nixon gets his 21-gun salute in Peking, we'll be giving him a different kind of salute in South Vietnam," the editor-in-chief of the official Hanoi newspaper *Nhan Dan* told a British correspondent.

Following Nixon's trip to Peking, Washington continued to escalate the bombing of Vietnam.

In late March, the revolutionary forces opened up their spring offensive. They swept down on the northernmost South Vietnamese province of Quangtri and within a few weeks had Saigon armies retreating or pinned down on four major fronts.

Nixon retaliated immediately by bringing U.S. bombers into the battles in South Vietnam, by further increasing the bombing of North Vietnam, and by mobilizing U.S. naval forces in the South China Sea.

On April 15 and 16 Hanoi and Haiphong were heavily bombed. War Secretary Melvin Laird held a news conference to declare that no place in Vietnam was off limits to the destructive power of the U.S. bombers.

Only this U.S. air and naval artillery support prevented the Saigon government from collapsing. This was admitted by high U.S. military officials, and it was the virtually unanimous opinion of the leading U.S. bourgeois publications that have news bureaus in South Vietnam.

James Reston, the influential vice-president of the *New York Times*, declared in a May 3 editorial, "The danger at the moment is that Hanoi is doing so well in the drive towards Hue that it may think it can smash its way to a military victory and not only demoralize and defeat Saigon but humiliate Washington."

"Hopefully, they will not take this gamble, because nobody in Washington or Moscow or Peking, let alone in Hanoi, can calculate what Mr. Nixon will do if he is trapped. This point has been emphasized through private channels to everybody on the other side."

Nixon's strategy

On May 8, five days later, President Nixon went on TV to announce his decision to blockade the port of Hai-

phong and seal off North Vietnam. This move had been ruled out by the Johnson administration. The Pentagon papers explain the reason why.

From the very beginning, the U.S. attack on Vietnam was based on the belief that neither Moscow nor Peking would respond with sufficient military aid to Hanoi to limit the attack. In fact, the step-by-step way in which the war was escalated was carefully planned to probe the response of Moscow and Peking to each heightened U.S. attack.

Here, for example, is how the U.S. intelligence services assessed the responses to the first U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 — purportedly in retaliation for the guerrilla attack at Pleiku.

"As predicted in CIA's October 1964 estimate, the reactions of the principal Communist powers to the limited U.S. reprisal strikes were relatively restrained, with both Moscow and Peking promptly and publicly pledging unspecified support and assistance to Hanoi. ... Neither raised the specter of a broad conflict or portrayed the U.S. actions as a threat to 'world' peace. Peking's propaganda, though full of bellicosity and bluster, and publicizing huge anti-U.S. rallies organized in China's major cities, carefully avoided threatening any direct Chinese intervention. ..."

"Moscow's response was even more restrained. ... While indicating that 'DRV defenses' would be strengthened, some Moscow broadcasts took note of the growing interest in the United States and elsewhere for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam." (Emphasis in original.)

"Bellicosity and bluster" from Peking, "interest in a negotiated settlement" from Moscow — these characterizations equally covered Moscow's and Peking's response to the U.S. Marine landing at Danang a month later, the swelling of U.S. forces in South Vietnam to more than 500,000, the scorched earth, search-and-destroy operations, and the bombing pulverization of cities, towns, villages, and hamlets in South and North Vietnam for the next seven years. Both regimes provided military and economic aid to the DRV but in such minimal quantities as to preclude the possibility of deterring the U.S. bombs and troops.

In the beginning of June, *Los Angeles Times* reporter George McArthur wrote from Saigon that "A cozy photograph of President Nixon and Russia's Communist Party boss Leonid I. Brezhnev is being airdropped by the million over North Vietnam."

"As might be expected, American psychological warfare operatives are overjoyed. The experts admit that leaflets are frequently of questionable value but in this instance the message is so obvious that the leaflets cannot fail to considerably discomfort Hanoi's leadership."

Hanoi response

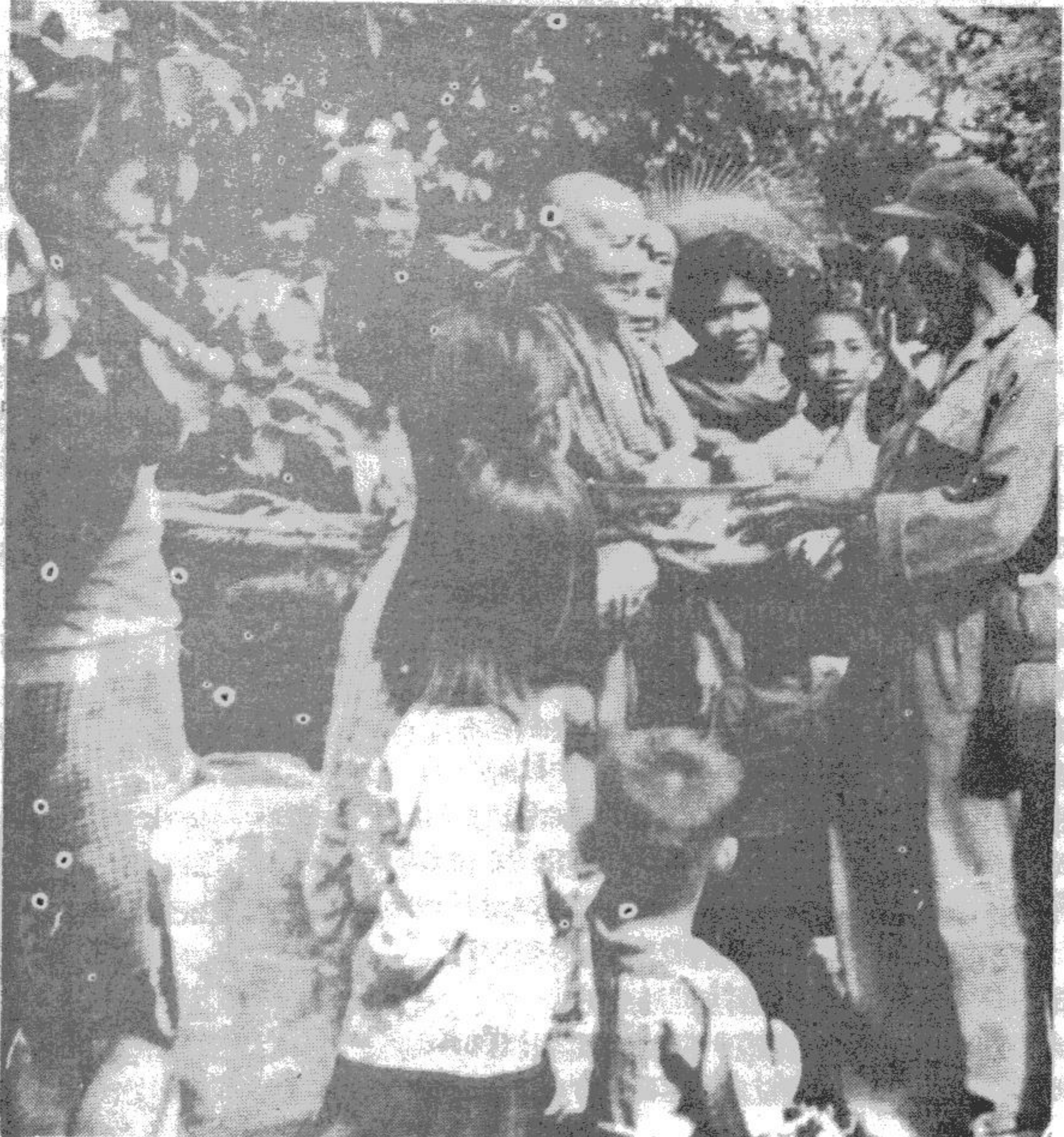
The propaganda emanating from Hanoi rarely takes issue with either Moscow's or Peking's policies, but as the U.S. bombing wore on in the summer there were clear indications of Hanoi's dissatisfaction. The sharpest implicit criticism came in a *Nhan Dan* editorial, Aug. 17.

"... for the U.S. imperialists, reconciliation is but a Machiavellian policy to materialize designs of aggression, enslavements, subversion and peaceful evolution by new methods," *Nhan Dan* stated. "In other words, to carry out the 'Nixon doctrine' U.S. imperialists have applied the policy of reconciliation toward a number of big powers in the hope of having a free hand to consolidate their forces, oppose the world revolutionary movement, suppress the revolution at home, bully the small countries, break the national liberation movement while not relinquishing its plan to prepare a new world war."

"For the socialist countries, safeguarding peace and carrying out peaceful coexistence cannot be separated from the world movement of independence, democracy and socialism. If this is aimed only at caring for the narrow, immediate interests of a country, it will not only harm the revolutionary movements of various countries, but, in the end, will bring to these very countries incalculable losses and make them give up their lofty internationalist duty. ..."

"... if out of the narrow interests of one's nation one tries to help the most reactionary forces avert the dangerous blows, just like throwing a life-buoy to a drowning pirate, that is a cruel reconciliation beneficial to the enemy and not beneficial to the revolution."

On Oct. 8, according to Henry Kissinger, Hanoi first agreed in secret sessions to separate the political and military aspects of a cease-fire treaty — the key to allowing the Saigon regime to stay in power.



AT THE GOING RATE

The going rate for workers' lives in the construction industry is (if the bosses plead guilty) £100. That is the most they are fined for negligence. If the worker only breaks his back, then they are only fined an average of £30.

"They're not interested in our safety, it's all production, production", said one construction worker to the "World in Action" television team. But the "World in Action" programme made out that the 'Anchor Project' at Scunthorpe is the most appalling site in the country. That is not so. Most of the sites up and down the country are littered with the bodies of workers.

It is one industry where even the safety inspectors have accidents. The big sites are riddled with small firms who are making huge profits out of the lives of these workers.

One of the reasons why the sites are littered with steel, making them unsafe, is the 'hurry up', 'make a name for myself' type of construction foreman. Instead of bringing the RSJs, stanchions, etc, from the stockyard as they are needed, he has them piled systematically in the centre of the working area. This saves the crane movement, and therefore money for the firm. But, under these conditions, when a worker needs to move quickly to avoid injury, he finds it impossible.

Workers such as industrial painters have a particularly high death and accident rate. Some of them labour under the most hazardous conditions, using rotten ladders and splintered scaffolding planks. All ladders and planks should be

BARBARIC TEN YEAR SENTENCE IN S. NEWINGTON TRIAL

Four of the defendants in the trial of the "Stoke Newington 8" have just sampled the "leniency

lashed securely. Painters very rarely lash either. Usually they have a choice of working in the unsafe conditions or finding another job.

One area was cleared up at Scunthorpe a few months back — in honour of a visit from Lord Melchett! It is now known to the workers as 'Melchett Road'.

ORGANISATION

There are a few well organised sites. Generally speaking, boiler makers, fitters, steel erectors, mechanised fitters and other sections of organised workers are reasonably safety conscious. But still the mortality rate is appalling.

The only way for the workers to get safe working conditions is to organise the sites by setting up rank and file safety committees. Permanent safety inspectors should be elected by the workers, and must be fully trained in safety conditions.

Until this is done the death rate will not decline. It hasn't declined over the last twenty years. Workers' lives will be lost, like the life of 17-year old Larry Leonard, who worked on the 'Anchor Project'. (There is some compensation for the profit-hungry bosses, in that he probably didn't have any dependents, and so they won't have to pay out compensation).

The "World in Action" team said that "BSC have laid down the challenge that it is the safest site in the country". The workers have taken up that challenge with their lives and proved these profit-hungry murderers to be liars.

FRAN BRODIE

or clemency or whatever it is" of the bourgeois courts. This plea for clemency came from the jury, which was split 10 - 2 against the four, Anna Mendelson, James Greenfield, Hilary Creek, and John Barker.

After the case of the "Hackney 5" — in which it was shown that police had planted guns and set the defendants up — there will be no surprise that the antique and bowdled "majesty of the law" ends up by railroading 4 young people to 10 years each in jail.

And what for? If the police were to be believed, for conspiring to cause explosions, for possessing explosives and firearms. Their sentences must be added to those of Ian Purdie and Jake Prescott, jailed earlier this year — a total of well over 60 years for miscellaneous unproven explosions directed against objects of public disgust like the Spanish authorities and Robert Carr.

The four defendants said — and we believe them — that they are not guilty. (In any case such actions are hardly crimes.) They are victims in the class war, devoured by a state blind and barbaric enough to believe that torturing 4 people will keep the working class quiet.

Throughout the day of 12 January 1971 the working class was not quiet. All over the country thousands of workers expressed their class hatred in protests against the Industrial Relations Bill and against Robert Carr, the Tory minister pushing it through Parliament like a knife through butter.

On that night two ineffectual explosions managed to fill the palpitating pages of the "nation"'s next-day newspapers.

For these therefore convenient fireworks the whole rotten frame-up front of the bourgeois courts heaps up massive sentences against four people whose real "offences" amount to their participation in the squatters movement, the claimants' union, kids' play centres, and many other radical actions — not least of which was a fine articulate defence of their socialist principles and refusal to kowtow to the

fore. Saigon is reported to be softening in its position on the peace proposals, as well it can afford to. The major block now seems to be that Thieu insists on the reinstallation of the demilitarised zone, dividing North and South Vietnam. He has let lapse his previous insistence on complete withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops to the North.

On 25 November, the Paris paper 'Le Monde' printed a report of a rebellion in the National Liberation Front, occurring on 10 November. This report was promptly denied by the Provisional Revolutionary Government, but 'Le Monde's' record of factual accuracy and support for the NLF's struggle makes it impossible to write it off.

The story is that 1000 fighters seized the camp occupied by the leadership of the PRG and the NLF, with the aim of eliminating the 'conciliationists'. The leaders



Anna Mendelson, John Barker, and Hilary Creek. Drawings from 'Time Out'.

court. These are their real "offences" against the state and we applaud them.

Two of the remaining four have been acquitted and discharged. One of them, Stuart Christie, has been in custody for 16 months. Two others have been acquitted of this set of charges, but, leaving no stone unturned except the ones they crawled out from, the police have charged Chris Bott and Catherine MacLean with a further set.

escaped, however, and on the 12th November the rebellion was put down by troops headed by Tran Nam Trung, Minister of Defence in the PRG, and a man from whom the rebels had hoped for support. The rebellion is reported to reflect opposition by the militant wing of the South Vietnamese Communist Party to the other (bourgeois) political parties in the NLF, and those in the CP who ally with them, opposition which had been brewing for some time.

The rebellion was followed by a reshuffle in the PRG, to the disadvantage of the more militant elements of the South Vietnamese CP. The North Vietnamese government is reported to have supported the PRG majority.

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MAOISTS AND MIDDLE CLASS VOTE FOR U.S. PLAN

Last Saturday, Conway Hall echoed with handclapping to the chant of "Victory to the PRG" as Ly Van Sau, chief spokesman for the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, concluded his speech to the 400-strong Indochina Solidarity Conference.

But this note of militancy and determination was not one which was to run through the rest of the conference weekend, supported by the International Marxist Group, Workers' Fight, a number of Maoist groups and assorted middle-class liberals.

During meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee before the conference, the IMG and Workers' Fight had argued for a position of 'Victory to the NLF' and 'US out', a line rejected by the majority of the committee, in favour of a position of support for the peace negotiations.

At the conference both positions were put forward, and after debate

the committee majority line was carried by 124 to 104 votes.

Whereas the Vietnamese may have been bombed into a compromise, a compromise which they more than any other liberation force in the world have the right to make, we in Britain have no right to make the same compromise. There are no bombs falling on Conway Hall, or on the wealthy North London homes of some of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Marion Kavanagh.

WHILE IN VIETNAM...

Meanwhile, the American B52s are continuing to bomb the North with greater intensity than ever be-

Just like the British working class in the case of the war in Ireland, for 20 years the American people were informed by a succession of war-mongering governments that the war in Vietnam was "a war in defense of democracy".

Now the series of attacks both by "legal" means and terror made on the Republican movement by the ruling Fianna Fail Party of the South gives ample evidence of the kind of "law" and the kind of "order" Britain is backing up.

WORKERS FIGHT stands firmly and unconditionally in support of the Republicans' campaign for a united Ireland and hopes that this criticism will help bring that goal nearer.



Three separate, but related, assaults have made up the latest offensive by the Lynch government against the Provisional Republican movement. These are the sacking by the Government of the Radio Telefis Eireann Authority the imprisonment of Sean MacStiofain by a Special Court, and the passing by the Dail of the "Offences Against the State (Amendment) Bill 1972".

But this offensive is not only directed towards the particular organisation largely responsible for the campaign against British Imperialism waged in the north. It is also a serious attack on the basic freedoms and democratic rights supposedly guaranteed under the Constitution to the citizens of the Irish Republic.

The present crisis began in the early hours of Sunday 19th November when MacStiofain, a leader of the Provisional Republican movement, was arrested after having given a radio interview to Kevin O'Kelly, the news editor of RTE.

CENSORSHIP

Later that day the content, but not the actual interview, was broadcast.

The Government, which has powers of censorship over broadcasting, has for some time past forbidden the broadcasting of interviews with Republicans. And in this case too, it claimed that the broadcasting of the contents of the interview with MacStiofain by Kevin O'Kelly contravened the Broadcasting Act. Also O'Kelly refused to say whom he had interviewed. For this O'Kelly was jailed.

A week later the entire RTE Authority was sacked; as a result television and radio were shut down for 48 hours while journalists and technicians went on strike. A 24 hour sympathy strike was also held later by newspaper journalists.

Ironically, the Government then proceeded to use the transcript of the interview as the basis of the State's evidence against MacStiofain in the Dublin Special Criminal Court, on a charge of being a mem-

RELEASE

L.W.R.

MILITANTS

Two young Irish Trotskyists, members of the League for a Workers' Republic, have been victimised by the Lynch government under the new laws. In an act of solidarity with the Republican victims of the oppression, Comrades George Holmes and Gerry O'Donovan have refused to recognise the Special Court. Workers' Fight extends solidarity to them and demands their release and the release of all political prisoners.

GREEN TORIES

SWOOP ON IRA

ber of the IRA. (The Lynch Government introduced Special Courts, without juries and with greatly relaxed 'rules of evidence', earlier this year — a move the British Government is only now getting round to in the North.)

Five days after his arrest, during which time he had been on hunger and thirst strike, MacStiofain was carried into court and sentenced to six months imprisonment.

Of the trial Bernadette Devlin said, "In the confrontation between Sean MacStiofain and the murder machine of repression ... I take my side shoulder to shoulder with the Provisionals."

NEW LAWS

As the trial proceeded, 'Union Jack' Lynch was dining at Downing Street with Heath and Douglas Hume. There was much speculation at the time over what took place there — what exactly was the deal done by Lynch and Heath?

Over the coming weekend the details of the deal became known, when the Government introduced in the Dail the 1972 Amendments to the OFFENCES AGAINST THE STATE ACTS (39 & '40) — which already gave the Government powers equal to, if not greater than, those the Unionists gave themselves under the Special Powers Act in the north.

According to this Bill, which is now law,

- "Any statement .. or conduct .. leading to a reasonable inference" (!) is enough to convict a man in a Special Court of being a member of the IRA.
- If the Defendant refuses to recognise the court, that will be taken as an admission of guilt.
- Those organising and taking part in demonstrations or actions which have been declared illegal under the "Offences" Act (though they may be otherwise legal) will be liable for a fine of £1,000 and/or 5 years in jail. (Recently 70 members of the Official republican movement were arrested for picketing the homes of Special Court judges. If the amended Act had been in existence, they could have been liable to this penalty.)
- The most important section of the new Act states that "Where a .. (police officer) not below the rank of Chief Superintendent .. states that he believes that the accused was at a material time a member of an unlawful organisation, the statement shall be evidence that he was then such a member."

Thus police officers are now, in the view of the Dublin government, the possessors of that privilege, so far only claimed for the Pope, of "infallibility" — of always being right and never wrong.

Those brought before the Special Courts are now assumed to be GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT — not innocent until proven guilty, a principle on which the whole of British and Irish law is claimed to be based.

Inspiration for this latest legislation can be traced to the writing of the British Army's Brigadier

Kitson, already influential in the Army's operations in the North. He writes, for instance, that "... the law should be used as just another weapon in the Government's arsenal and in this case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public."

WORKERS' ANGER

Meanwhile the Parliament building was continually besieged by demonstrating workers, students and journalists protesting against the Act, the imprisonment of MacStiofain and the silencing of RTE. Throughout the country workers unofficially downed tools and marched.

The ITGWU requested the ICTU (the Irish Congress of Trade Unions) to take a "strong stand", stating they would "oppose this hideous amendment all the way..." And the Irish Federation of Trade Unions referred to the Bill as "an extension of internment without trial (which) can only be regarded as repression of the worst kind and designed to recreate the iniquitous conditions of Nazi Germany."

Strong words. But the extensive industrial action has so far been unofficial and spontaneous. The trade union leadership, while condemning, has not yet acted. (A sad reflection on a trade union movement which in 1920 led a general strike which succeeded in the space of 3 days in winning the release of republican prisoners on hunger strike.)

The Officials very busily kept out of the line of fire, refusing even the most elementary action for fear of being associated with the Provisionals. In the long run of course this should play into the latter's hands by showing up the Officials' left talk as so much verbiage.

The organisation and leadership of these demonstrations against the Government's offensive has thus fallen mainly to the Provisional Republicans. But their approach has also given rise to much criticism from their followers and supporters, particularly those in the north who have been carrying the fight against imperialism for the past 3 years.

While calling for the defeat of the Lynch government and the release of MacStiofain the Provo leadership has attempted to maintain a "respectable" image.

Speakers on their platforms stated that they had nothing against the Irish police and army, only the politicians; yet that same army was keeping in the Curragh army camp over 120 republican prisoners under military custody. Outside the Mater Hospital, where MacStiofain was taken after his conviction, the Chief of police was actually asked to address the large crowd from the republican platform.

Generally, the Provisionals seemed unfortunately more concerned with getting the reactionary former Archbishop of Dublin to speak in support of them than they were with organising mass working class action against the government — the only sort of action which could possibly be effective.

They were more content to allow the Dail to remain at the centre of the political stage than they were with organising workers who were on strike. This was in keeping with their attempt to appeal to a mythical "national conscience" instead of to those who have the power to veto the actions of a government bent on attacking the basic rights of a "democratic capitalist" regime.

A.I.L. TO

CAMPAIN

AGAINST

REPRESSION

The Anti Internment League has decided to campaign in Britain against the wave of repression which Lynch's Government has launched against the Republican and Labour movement in the Irish Republic. Its meeting on December 5th resolved to start an immediate drive in Britain for solidarity with those fighting against Heath's Green-Tory stooge regime in the South.

The Campaign will be aimed especially at the 1½ million Irish exiles in Britain, most of whom have not so far participated in the work of the A.I.L.

Moving the resolution in favour of the campaign a WORKERS' FIGHT delegate noted that the main opposition to the police state powers now assumed by the Dublin Government had come from the Irish Labour Party and the trade unions. The plans for a coalition government between the Irish Labour Party and the conservative opposition party, Fine Gael, have been buried for now by the fierce labour and trade union hostility to Lynch's 'dictatorship'. (Fine Gael supports the government measures.) The class polarisation in the South caused by the repressions means that the A.I.L. can open up a whole new front of activity, appealing for specific solidarity with the Southern labour movement against the Lynch Tories.

The question was also raised of the political basis of the A.I.L.'s opposition to repression in the South. Having formerly had a purely liberal opposition to internment in Northern Ireland, it had then transformed itself (particularly after the fusion with the Irish Solidarity Campaign) into a specifically anti-imperialist movement in open solidarity with those fighting imperialism.

The question was posed by the WF delegate — was A.I.L.'s opposition to repression in the South to rest on a reversion to a purely liberal dissatisfaction with blatant injustice? Or was it to recognise the repression in the South, Britain's neo-colony, as stemming from the same root as direct British oppression in the North — that is, Britain's economic domination of the whole of Ireland?

Thus what was posed was opposition to this system as a whole on the basis of a fight for an Irish socialist workers' republic. Was it now possible to raise this without obscuring the fundamental issue for those living here — opposition to British involvement in Ireland?

It was decided to postpone discussion of these further issues. A special meeting will be called within a fortnight to launch the campaign.

WHERE IS BRITAIN GOING



Roy
Ratcliffe

Coventry Toolroom Workers at a mass meeting. After years of boom-time earnings and job security the workers suddenly face the threat of the dole queue.

TO UNDERSTAND "WHERE IS Britain going" we must begin by briefly picking out the **main essential** points of the past period. This article will look at the underlying "economic trends" which have gone almost un-noticed and which have led to the present severe **economic** crisis and through that to the severe **political** crisis which now faces the working class.

Following on from the First World War (1914- 18) the 1920 budget signalled a sharp and severe slump. In the year following this budget industrial production fell by 25% and unemployment rose by 16% to a level of 18% and never fell below 10% throughout the 1920s. This economic crisis brought about a sharp political crisis as Capital and Labour, workers and bosses, fought each other to decide who should bear the brunt of the economic devastation.

The working class was beaten in the political struggle and thus had to bear the brunt of the economic devastation. The political struggle had its high point in the General Strike of 1926, and the economic devastation lasted from the 1920s until the late '30s. This was a period of intense hardship for the working class and further relative decline for British capitalism.

The climb out of the slump of the 1930s was impeded by the speculation around the 1929 crisis and the extravagant loans which had been made during the buildup to this crisis. The loans had been made in the shortsighted hope of preventing liquidations and thus a writing down of the assets of the capitalist class. As a result of this there was hardly any capital available to invest.

Thus the British capitalist class was unable to take immediate advantage of the defeat of the working class to solve their problems. The 1938 Coal Act, and the 1939 Industries Act, were hardly under way before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Thus the historical decline of British capitalism was **interrupted** by the advent of the Second World War. It is important that this is understood: that the decline and crisis was **interrupted**.

The decline of British Capitalism can best be seen in its share of world output. In 1870 one third of the world's goods were made in Britain. By the outbreak of world war one this had shrunk to 14% and by the outbreak of world war two it was just over 8%. By 1963 it was down to 4%.

WAR AND BOOM

With the outbreak of war, the mass-

es of unemployed were quickly absorbed into the Armed Forces and into the 'war effort'. During the war period the Trade Unions, instead of fighting, were used to regulate the demands of the working class. Union leaders were brought into the Government to prevent the workers from taking advantage of the war situation to press for higher wages. Thus nationally agreed wages were the only way (apart from piece work rates) to increase earnings.

After the war, and due to the enormous destruction of materials and manpower caused by the war, British capitalism was faced with an opportunity of taking part in the boom period of post-war reconstruction. The destruction had been so great that there was a terrific demand for goods and manpower.

And the technological innovations arising as a by-product of the wartime and post-war armaments developments and arms race provided opportunities for capital investment, thus sustaining the post-war boom. In these conditions the British capitalist class shared in the fruits of expansion, while, after 1950, definitively continuing their relative decline on the world market.

The shop stewards' network inherited from World War II, with continuing full employment, was used to gain advances in pay and condi-

tions **at the point of production**. Hence the gap between nationally negotiated minimum and **actual** wage rates in many industries, called "wage drift", throughout the '50s and '60s; and the number of short, sharp, effective, **localised** unofficial strikes, which comprised over 90% of strikes in this period. This development was not fiercely resisted by employers because they were making good profits and they were competing for scarce labour.

SHOP STEWARDS

This development away from nationally agreed rates to domestic rates is an **important factor** in the coming struggles, because it took the negotiating power away from the Trade Union leaders and brought it to the shop stewards, who are 'unpaid' elected rank and file workers. Disputes could often be won before the District Official knew about it. In 1950 there were 1300 strikes which took up just over a million working days lost, compared with the average of almost 35 million in the years following the First World War.

There was a large growth in the number of shop stewards. Today there are 11 million Trade Unionists and 175 000 shop stewards. This growth of shop floor strength



haste to formalise this development, through entering the Common Market. But this cannot be a long term solution. Since the capitalist class cannot dictate to other capitalist classes without going to war with them, the way back to profitability lies through dictating to its own working class.

To increase profitability the workers' share of production must be reduced. The ruling class must somehow hold back the level of wages, and this is what they have been trying to do in one form or another since the 1960s.

Voluntary Incomes Policy, Productivity Deals, Devaluations, In Place of Strife, Unemployment, Industrial Relations Act, Pay Freeze — all have been attempts to hold down the level of wages in order to restore profitability. The stress has been on attacking the shop floor strength because this is where resistance is hardest and most successful.

And, in fact, these attempts at profitability are, even with a cut in working class living standards, likely to come unstuck without a big expansion in world markets, an expansion which is not likely to materialise in the coming period.

STRIKES

Employers are mounting firmer resistance to the level of wage rises. This resistance is clearly demonstrated in the statistics on strikes. Strikes are becoming more intense, of longer duration, and are changing their nature. Can you remember demarcation disputes? Disputes over manning schedules?

In 1960 16% of stoppages were about pay. In 1970 over half were about pay! In 1960 there were 2849 stoppages with 3 million working days lost. In 1971 there were 2223 strikes (600 less than 1960) but 13 million working days were lost (10 million more). And in the first 8 months of 1972 there were 1610 stoppages with an enormous 19½ million days lost!

The attacks of the past period have cut across localised interests to a large extent, and workers are hitting back on a national basis, often dragging their official leaders with them. This brings a bigger role of trade union officials, with all the dangers inherent in this as they seek means for containing the rank and file.

Successive Governments have injected large doses of Government money into "the Economy", as they put it. What this really means is that they have given large amounts of taxpayers' money to private industry. This has been done in an attempt to bail out sinking businesses, but of course it is only a temporary help. Because the **fundamental crisis** is still there.

Profitability is fundamental to capitalism because under capitalism production is undertaken not for the use of the goods produced, but for the **profit** which can be made by selling them.

British industry needs to attract more capital investment in order to keep up with foreign competitors (new machinery etc), but capital is only invested where it is most profitable.

So we are back to the same dilemma. British capitalism needs to increase its profitability. It cannot do so by continually raising its prices, because of international competition. It must therefore **take back** the concessions which workers won during the boom.

But they do not appear as concessions to the workers themselves, they appear as 'natural' rights. The standards of living attained by workers are felt to 'belong' to them. They are not anxious to give them back easily.

Therefore we are to be compelled to give up our 'high' (?) standard of living. We have the stick



New offensive, new tactics. Above: builders' flying pickets. Below: factory occupation at Briants.



and the carrot offered to us. The stick is the Industrial Relations Act, and the carrot is incomes policy, that is, wage restraint plus phony token price and dividend controls.

So far all the carrots have failed to induce workers to give up the struggle. And the stick has been unable to beat the dockers.

A QUESTION OF POWER

The basic economic battle over profitability is not always seen, and, when it is, its implications are not always understood. Most workers are just fighting for jobs and pay, without realising that they are daily knocking nails in the capitalist coffin.

It is **precisely** because these implications are not seen and understood that the working class can be defeated by the ruling class in the political battles which develop from the economic struggles.

And this is the contradiction; workers now struggling for a decent standard of living, devising new tactics as they do so, are undermining the very **basis** of capitalism and yet they do not realise this. British capitalism cannot maintain the workers' standards of living, let alone improve them, and still remain sufficiently profitable.

There is, then, a very severe economic crisis facing the British capitalist class, which is carried over to a severe political crisis. The capitalist class itself or at least large sections of it are becoming aware of this fact. In an

effort to divide the working class along 'consumer' vs 'producer' lines they have dressed the crisis up as **inflation and law and order**. But **inflation and the question of law and order are secondary symptoms of the crisis**. The crisis is one of the profitability of British capitalism.

At the high point of the coming political battles which flow from the economic crisis, the question of **power** will be clearly posed. Essentially there will be only two ways to go.

1) Either a further defeat for the working class and the consequent set back for many years; or
2) The conquest of power by the working class in Britain and a number of other capitalist countries, and the transformation of society along socialist lines.

The most conscious sections of the ruling class already see this writing on the wall. Thus in the 'Financial Times' 29.7.72 Editorial entitled 'A Question of Power' we read:

"This week we have come close to being faced with the question of just who, if anyone, governs this country".

Such clarity is not to be found in the established leadership of the working class. How are they preparing workers for the coming struggles? Vic Feather says in the Sunday Times:

"There is no crisis. There is a very difficult problem facing the country that all of us (?) want to sort out. The TUC recognises that there is a long haul to solve the country's underlying problems"

You see? Feather is at one with the ruling class. They too recognise that "there is a long haul to solve the ... underlying problems". The underlying problems are the **profitability** of British capitalism and the 'long haul' is the defeat of the working class.

The Labour Party is no better. They still talk as if the Tory party were just bad managers, and that all that is necessary to put the house in order is to install better managers. At the recent Labour Party conference no mention was even made of the crisis.

UNDERSTANDING

What is now necessary for the Working class in order that it is not defeated in the coming struggles is a **conscious** understanding of these developments taking place in society, and how they flow from the **economic base**. This understanding must begin within the most conscious sections — the vanguard of the working class — the militants and revolutionaries. In the daily struggles we carry out we must constantly develop this understanding amongst our fellow workers and militants and amongst ourselves. We must not only assist fellow workers in their day to day struggles but we must also point out to them patiently and consistently the contradictory nature of their fight, and argue for a **socialist** answer to the contradiction.

The working class are in a fighting mood. They have the strength to defeat capitalism. They have the will to fight for their expectations. They lack only a consciousness of purpose.

They can only gain that consciousness of purpose from **outside** of their own day-to-day experience, by an understanding of Marxist theory. The fight for the assimilation of this theory takes place within the ranks of revolutionaries and in their relationship to the class of which they are part. This is the demand that the present period puts upon those who 'side' with the working class. ■

not only secured steady wage rises for millions of Trade Unionists, but it also often prevented bosses from introducing new forms of machinery and methods on disadvantageous terms to the workforce.

FALLING RATE OF PROFIT

But soon, with its relative decline and with the end of the post-war boom world-wide, British capitalism began to feel the hot blast of competition. And it is with this increasing international competition that the severe internal crisis begins to reappear.

Between the hammer of the British working class and the anvil of international competition, the **profitability** of British capitalism has been flattened. The workers' share of what is produced has increased and the employers' share has decreased.

One result of this decrease in the profitability has been a move to investments abroad. In the early 1950s British capital investment abroad averaged around £180 million. By the 1960s it had increased to over £250 million per year, and by 1969 to over £500 million!

This new investment has been predominantly in the European markets and the United States, on the grounds of the economic expansion to be found there. Thus the

A BOOK YOU SHOULD READ

PETERLOO MASSACRE

THE PETERLOO MASSACRE by Joyce Marlow. Panther Books paperback. Reviewed by STEVEN BOYD.

The Peterloo massacre is a piece of history which the capitalist class would like us workers to forget, lest it reminds us of the real hatred our so-called betters have for the working class. Even recently the 'business community' of Manchester successfully prevented a plan for commemorating this savage event in working class history.

Coming four years after the battle of Waterloo ('Peterloo' is a contemptuous reference to that battle) this battle was, in the words of a 22 year old worker John Lees, "downright murder". Before he died, of the wounds inflicted by the swords of the cavalry, John Lees (who had himself fought at Waterloo) said that at that battle "he had never been in such danger" "for there it had been man to man".

HENRY HUNT

On the 16th August 1819 at a mass meeting on St Peters Field, Manchester, over 60 000 men, women, and children assembled to listen to Henry Hunt, a popular Radical speaker. The reason why 60 000 Lancashire folk had been 'moved' to march in orderly procession to St Peters Field is to be found in the economic conditions of their lives.

The cotton boom days of the 1800s had come to an end, wages were falling, and unemployment was rising, as were prices. Factory wages had dropped from 40 shillings per week to 24 shillings, whilst those of the hand loom weavers went down to an average of 12 shillings by 1815. The Corn Bill was passed, which prevented foreign corn being imported until the price of home grown wheat had risen to 80 shillings a quarter. This meant that in a period of declining wages the working man's mainstay food, bread, was to rise. This two-pronged attack upon the living standards of workers did not go without protest. Just such a protest was to be made on that fateful day in Manchester.

PREPARATIONS

The plans for the meeting were made for a 'peaceful', 'orderly', 'dignified' procession and meeting. Evidence of the peaceful intentions were the hundreds of

children and wives who accompanied the menfolk. In fact the whole day took on a carnival nature as the weather grew hot and sultry. No sticks or weapons were to be carried, and the leaders had sprigs of laurel in their hats as a "token of amity and peace".

However peaceful the marchers' intentions, the authorities prepared their actions with warlike determination. They had at their disposal 400 special policemen, 600 mounted hussars, and 500 other soldiers. At the request of Lord Sidmouth, Lord Derby (the Lord Lieutenant) requested his officers to put their men in a state of readiness. The Manchester Yeomen immediately sent their sabres to be sharpened. This action was an early warning of the impending tragedy.

BLOODSHED

In the meantime the Manchester Magistrates had employed 'scavengers' to remove every brick, stone, or possible missile from St Peters Field, "so that the Reformers might be destitute of every means to resist" (page 135), even to the removal of nearby lamp-posts!

The Liberal and Radical thinkers, under whose leadership the masses fell, sought from the beginning to limit the masses' struggle to a reform of Parliament. Thus in a letter to Hunt, a Joseph Johnson of the Patriotic Union Society of Manchester wrote:

"Trade here is not worth the following. Everything is almost at a standstill, nothing but ruin and starvation stare one in the face. The state of the district is truly dreadful. I believe nothing but the greatest exertion can prevent an insurrection" (my emphasis, SB).

This statement clearly shows the prospects facing the working people on the one hand, and on the other hand the fear of the Radicals that things might get out of hand. When Hunt issued an address to the organisers of the ill-fated meeting, he spoke of:

"Your steady... firm... temperate deportment... our enemies will seek every opportunity... to incite riot... so they may spill our blood... so come then armed with no other weapon but that of... self approving conscience... not to be excited, irritated... nor to commit any breach of the public peace".

Thus the Radical orator disarmed the masses whilst their rulers prepared its armed bodies of men for bloodshed.

The 60 000 men, women, and children waited patiently in the stifling



heat for Hunt to arrive. Meanwhile the Manchester Yeomen who were to draw first blood that day were preparing in the usual way by quaffing large quantities of wine and getting thoroughly drunk, in Pickfords Yard. When they were given the order to advance they "leapt, clambered, or were pushed onto their horses". They drew their newly sharpened sabres and careered off in a drunken gallop, trampling to death a two-year old child and injuring his mother, on the way.

BERSERK

They were ordered to assist in the arrest of Hunt and the others on the platform of the meeting, and they did so by cutting a path through the peaceful crowd with their swords. In their wake lay dying and injured men and women, either crushed by the horses' hooves or slashed by the sabres.

Thus the Manchester Yeomen Cavalry achieved with savage ruthlessness their objective and the arrest of the leaders was accomplished.

But this taste of blood was too much for them, and they, as Joyce Marlow's excellent book puts it, "went berserk". At one point of the field the riot act was being

read by magistrates while the Manchester Cavalry began cutting and hacking about them at defenceless men, women, and children. The Magistrates, seeing this action, considered that their 'brave yeomen' were being attacked by the crowd, and they ordered the 15th Hussars in to disperse the crowd.

This august body of 'brave men' swept into the crowd. Women who crouched over their children's bodies, crying out to the Cavalry not to hurt them, had their heads cleaved in by the sabres. The fleeing workers were pursued through the streets of Manchester, all the time being mercilessly harried, and hacked, and stabbed. They were treated in this way because they had the audacity to complain about their inhuman living conditions.

Joyce Marlow, a Manchester woman herself, is another author who does the working class a great service by fully documenting this savage piece of history and reminding us of the undying hatred which the ruling class has for workers who they feel offer a threat to "their established order". From Peterloo to Llanelli, from Sidney St to Liverpool 1911, the ruling classes show the same merciless savagery to workers, whether they fight in Britain, Vietnam, Ireland, or anywhere else in the world.

The British Press often depicts the Irish Fianna Fail government as "soft on the IRA", and would have us believe that the vicious clamp-down of the past two weeks, in which democratic rights went down like ninepins, was some dramatic new departure.

CHRIS GRAY here describes Fianna Fail's past repressive record and also the fine record of struggle of IRA militants who fought back even from jails and internment camps.



SEAN McCAUGHEY: kept for three and a half years in solitary confinement with no outdoor exercise. He refused to wear prison clothes and was forced to spend several years in his cell, covered only by a blanket.

The Twenty-six counties governing party, Fianna Fail, was founded in 1926 from among those who supported De Valera's withdrawal from Sinn Fein — the political party of that section of the Republican movement which had opposed the sell-out Treaty between the Irish middle class and British imperialism which established "modern" Ireland.

De Valera believed it was necessary for Sinn Fein, which had refused to enter Parliament, to take its seats and argue the case in the Free State Dail. He soon proved his point in electoral terms when in 1932 his party won power. But the real point behind the electoral game was that De Valera represented a section of the Irish middle class and, though the institutions of the Free State couldn't serve the mass of the people, particularly the working class) in a real fight for freedom, they served the whole middle class, De Valera's section included, very well indeed.

THREAT

At this time the traditional Republicans were still active in the old Sinn Fein party and the IRA. De Valera needed their support against the fascist Blue-shirt movement, organised by the ousted section of the middle class, which threatened a coup d'etat.

But Sinn Fein and the IRA

FIANNA FAIL'S REPRESSION OF I.R.A. NOT THE FIRST TIME

were themselves a threat to De Valera's policy of developing S. Irish capitalism to the limit while allowing partition to stand, and the fundamental Irish economic subservience to Britain to continue.

De Valera's political challenge caused a variety of responses in the republican movement. Some were for a turn toward socialism and the creation of an alliance of workers and small farmers — this was the so-called "Republican Congress" group.

Others favoured a new constitutional republican party (Cumann Poblachta na h'Eireann), an idea revived after World War 2 by Sean MacBride.

None of these alternatives proved viable however, and De Valera was able to steal the show by a piece of pure showmanship when he eliminated the crown and the Governor-General as elements of Irish political life; rewrote the constitution; stabilised Anglo-Irish economic relations; won back the British naval bases at Cobh and Lough Swilly in 1938, and boosted industrial production.

'EMERGENCY

In 1936 De Valera felt strong enough to turn on the IRA. He had his own "special branch" of ex-IRA men led by Colonel Broy (known as the "Broy Harriers") on hand to round up the suspects.

In desperation the IRA formally declared war on Britain and launched a bombing campaign in England. The British government responded to the IRA's 1939 declaration of war by emergency legislation, the Prevention of Violence Act, introduced that summer.

De Valera supported them by stepping up action against the movement in the 26 Counties: the Offences against the State Act (amended last week with new draconian features; see p.5) became law on June 14th 1939 — actually in advance of British legislation, which only reached the Commons ten days later.

A military tribunal was established in Dublin on August 25th.

Repression against the IRA continued throughout the Second World War — known in the 26 Counties as "the Emergency" — to ensure that they could not apply the old maxim "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity."

Throughout this time De Valera managed to retain mass support by declaring neutrality — much to Churchill's annoyance

A raid on the Magazine Fort in Phoenix Park, Dublin, in December 1939, which resulted in the seizure by the IRA of most of the Free State Army's reserve supply of ammunition, led

to stricter repression in the form of the Emergency Powers Act, 1940. From this point on the net began to be drawn tighter and tighter.

Leaders of the movement in the North became convinced that treachery was responsible, and the blame was fastened on the then Chief of Staff Stephen Hayes (a Wexford man). In reality the Special Branch had most of the information they needed anyway.

Hayes was forced to sign a "confession" but succeeded in escaping and throwing himself

strike in an attempt to force an improvement in prison conditions: after both D'Arcy and McNeale had died in April the Government promised political status for IRA prisoners in Mountjoy. But this still left the situation at Portlaoise Prison unchanged.

Sean McCaughey, who had acted as prosecutor in the IRA trial of Stephen Hayes, was captured after Hayes' escape and died on Hunger and thirst strike at Portlaoise. Others experienced the privation of being confined to their cells without clothing for long periods when they refused to wear prison uniform, in an attempt to assert their status as political prisoners.

Others perished at the hands of the state's executioners. Patrick McGrath and Tommy Harte were executed on September 6th 1940 for shooting a detective who was trying to run them in. George Plant was shot on March 5th 1942 for killing a suspected informer. And Charlie Kerins was hanged by an imported English hangman on December 1st 1944.



The Curragh concentration camp 'houses' the victims of Lynch's laws — most of them IRA men.

on the mercies of the police.

This episode drove in one more nail, and despite manful attempts to reorganise the movement arrests continued, culminating in the capture of Charlie Kerins, last of a line of Chiefs of Staff, in June 1944.

MOUNTJOY

Prison treatment was harsh, but the IRA prisoners fought back against the regime by a number of means — hunger strikes, refusal to wear prison clothes and escape attempts. On October 22nd 1939 Republican prisoners in Mountjoy attempted to blow their way out of jail. Patrick McGrath went on hunger strike for 43 days until the Government announced they were prepared to release him; the authorities moved McGrath to hospital but planned to bring him before the Military Court later on, a plan which McGrath checkmated by escaping from hospital.

In February 1940 six prominent Republicans at Mountjoy, including Jack McNeale and Tony D'Arcy, went on hunger

Gerry Boland, Fianna Fail Minister of Justice, rejoiced. He announced that the IRA was dead. But this particular bird displayed unexpected phoenix-like qualities. By the mid-fifties the IRA was once more capable of offensive operations, despite its recent severe defeat. And then again, after a further defeat in 1962, it mushroomed after 1969.

Republicanism is irrepressible because it is the unsatisfied drive of the Irish people for freedom. It will only become unnecessary when that freedom is won. That is the lesson from its repeated revivals after every the most crushing defeats.

And in turn, the lesson of those defeats is that the general Republicanism that has saturated the very air of Ireland for so long is not itself adequate to attain that freedom, either against the British or their neo-colonial stooges such as Lynch.

The Republicanism that will fully do that is the revolutionary socialist republicanism of the Irish working class, given its best expression so far in the writings of James Connolly.



WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS' FIGHT
CAPITALISM is inseparable from the exploitation by the bourgeoisie of the working class 'at home' and (since 'advanced' capitalism became imperialist) of the workers and peasants in the colonies and neo-colonies abroad.

It is a vicious system geared to buttressing the strong against the weak, to serving the handful of capitalists against the millions of workers, and to keeping many millions in poverty so that a few may prosper. Capitalism exalts property and degrades life. It is at the root of the racialism which poisons and divides worker against worker. It is a system of massive waste and social disorganisation, at the same time as it forces the working class to fight every inch of the way to better or even maintain its wages and conditions.

Having once been progressive, in that it at least developed, in the only way then possible, the productive resources of mankind, it is now a totally reactionary force in history. Its expansion after World War 2 gave it merely the appearance of health: in reality the boom was like the flush on a sick man's face. And already economic expansion has given way to creeping stagnation.

TODAY the ruling class can keep their system going only at the cost of large scale unemployment and attempts to cut the living standards of workers in the 'rich' parts of the world, of massive starvation and bloodshed in the 'poor' two thirds of the world, and of the ever-present threat of the destruction of humanity through nuclear war.

THE ONLY WAY OUT is for the working class to take power and to bring the resources of the modern economy under a rational working class plan, in place of the present unplanned and blind private-profit system. Having overthrown capitalism and established social ownership of the means of production, the working class will build towards a truly communist society, in which at last the principle will be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

The working class has created political parties for this purpose — LABOUR PARTIES, COMMUNIST PARTIES, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. — But in country after country these parties have joined capitalist governments and managed capitalism. They have betrayed the socialist aspirations of their working class supporters, tied the labour movement to the bosses' state, interest and ideology, and destroyed the political independence of the working class.

The task is therefore to build a socialist party which will stand firmly for the interests of the working class. WORKERS' FIGHT is a group of revolutionary socialists, aiming to build that party: a party which is democratically controlled by an active working class membership, which preserves its political independence and fights the ideological domination of the ruling class.

The basis of our activity is the scientific theory of MARXISM, the only theory which gives a clear understanding of present day society and of the necessity of revolutionary change.

Although they cannot organise the struggle for workers' power, the TRADE UNIONS are indispensable for the defence of workers' interests. We fight for the independence of the unions from all state control, and within the unions for militant policies and for democracy. We see the trade union bureaucracy as a distinct stratum which acts as a broker between workers and bosses. Its life and work-situation is quite different from that of the working class. Lacking a direct, necessary allegiance to working class interests, or any fundamental historical interests of its own, its general tendency is to work with the bosses and their state against the working class.

Only a mass national rank and file movement, linking up the different industries and guided by the ideas of revolutionary Marxism can, in this period, turn the trade unions into reliable instruments of working class interests, independent of the bosses' state.

We fight against the INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, against any incomes policy under capitalism, and against any legal restrictions on trade unionism.

We fight against UNEMPLOYMENT; for a national minimum wage; for work or full pay; against productivity bargaining.

We fight to extend the power of workers to control the details of their own lives in industry here and now. We stand for the fight for WORKERS' CONTROL with the understanding that it can be made a serious reality only in a workers' state. We are against any workers' 'participation' in managing their own exploitation under capitalism.

We believe that the "PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO SOCIALISM" is a crippling illusion. The capitalist class will not leave the stage peacefully; no ruling class ever has. Socialism can be built only by smashing the capitalist state machine (army, police, civil service) which is the ultimate defence of the bosses' power in society, and replacing it with a state based on democratic workers' councils.

The LABOUR PARTY is a capitalist party in its ideas, its policies, and in its record in government. At the same time, the bedrock organisations of the working class, the trade unions, support and finance the Labour Party. There is an open valve connection between the Labour Party and the unions, allowing the possibility of large-scale active working class participation in the party.

We relate to the Labour Party, therefore, not by simply denouncing it, but by attempting to advance the working class towards outgrowing and breaking through the stage in its own development — ideological, political and organisational — represented by Labourism.

We fight for full and equal rights for WOMEN, for female emancipation from the male domination which has co-existed throughout history with class society and which has its roots in such society. We fight, in particular, for the emancipation of women of our own class, suffering a double and triple exploitation, who have been most accurately described as the "slaves of the slaves."

We fight against RACIALISM and against immigration controls. We fight for the integration of immigrant workers into the labour movement and for a united fight against capitalism, whilst supporting the right of black minorities in Britain to form defence leagues or independent political organisations.

We give unconditional support to the struggles of oppressed peoples everywhere fighting against IMPERIALISM, and to their organisations leading the fight.

British workers have — fundamentally — more in common with every single worker throughout the globe, irrespective of race, religion, nationality or colour, than with the whole of the British ruling class. We see the fight for socialism as a world wide struggle, necessitating the creation of a world revolutionary party. We give critical support to the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL.

We stand for a political revolution of the working class against the bureaucracies of THE U.S.S.R. and the other countries called 'communist', which we consider to be degenerated and deformed workers' states. The social regime of the different Bureaucracies has nothing in common with socialism, let alone with real communism. At the same time we defend the nationalised economy in these countries against capitalism and imperialism, unconditionally: that is, irrespective of the selfish, usually anti-working class and anti-revolutionary policies of the ruling bureaucrats, and against those policies.

There are OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS (including the official British section of the Fourth International) which have generally similar aims but methods differing from ours, or differing conceptions about what needs to be done here and now. We consider all these groups to be seriously — sometimes grossly — inadequate in theory and practice. We favour unity in action with these groups where possible, and a serious dialogue about our differences.

REVIEW OF THE LEFT PRESS

new left review

ON THE COMMON MARKET

"Threatened by the raw, turbulent reality of the class struggle, Labourism could easily contain and canalise (it) if only a 'national' form for it was found — if, that is, the mounting unrest and the fight against the Industrial Relations Bill could be assimilated to the fight against the Common Market, as vaguely 'the something'. Then, Labour could appear again (after the sadness of 1964-70) as the party of both class and nation."

"There could be a 'Great Debate', an exercise in national navel-scratching, just because there would be no great debate: things could be relied on not to get out of hand. The spectacle would not simply substitute for the reality, but also help prevent it happening."

As Tom Nairn argues in the Common Market special number of 'NEW LEFT REVIEW', the Common Market entry issue has played an important role over the last year or so in making the class struggle in Britain safe for capitalism.

The industrial struggle surged forward, drawing in new sections, developing new tactics. Meanwhile, the presumptive leadership of the working class, from the centre and left of the Labour Party right across to the various revolutionary socialist groupings, sweated over calculations of Parliamentary votes and the possibility, somehow, of "kicking out the Tories" with the aid of the Powellite right. The Wilson leadership was in total discredit — and the left obligingly took the heat off him by loudly berating "Jenkins the blackleg."

And in fact it was among the left that the chauvinist "bellowing about the threat to his kippers, his beer and his parliament" was most fervent.

The attitude of the Labour Left was, as Nairn points out, motivated by their basic ideological axioms. "One begins by defending British socialism; before the audience can draw breath, one is defending the sacred prerogatives of Parliament, national sovereignty, the Constitution, 1940, decent British imperialism and all the rest."

The Labour Left denounced EEC entry as leading Britain into a bosses' conspiracy. A strange position: "Representatives of the most politically successful capitalist society in history — where the bourgeoisie has been immovably in the saddle for over three hundred years — denouncing the 'capitalist conspiracy' afoot in their relatively precarious continental neighbours."

The line of the Communist Party was entirely similar: "The pro-marketters are prepared to sacrifice British Sovereignty to enter the Market... For them, profit comes before country. This is something which, when fully grasped, the British people, we are sure, will never tolerate." (Gollan)

And further to the left, "None of the Marxist movements opted out of or opposed the anti-Market crusade. Yet none of them — with the possible exception of the CP — looked happy inside it." Fewest doubts and qualifications were found in the straightforward and primitive Socialist Labour League and Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). The bosses were for the EEC, the workers were against it. That was that. Marxist analysis? Petty-bourgeois academic intellectualism!

The attitude of the more self-conscious groupings, the International Socialists and the International Marxist Group, is described by Nairn as follows: "Imagine a spectator at a particularly bloody rugby match, who 'supported' his side with the same patriotic cries as everyone else, but broke off occasionally to say sternly: "Not so much chauvinist frenzy down there, please! We can do without these

excesses of petty bourgeois aggression!" The position of marxists vis-a-vis the anti-Europe movement was worse than this. They were supposed to be playing, and to issue their reprimands, therefore, from the heart of the surbs. Indeed, as a theoretical 'vanguard' their job was to lead the game in the very front line of the scrum — alternately striving, as it were, to touch down at the goalpost of National Sovereignty and to tell their striving fellow-players "Down with petty-bourgeois nationalism and flag-waving chauvinists!"

The Great Debate

WORKERS' FIGHT, at the height of the 'Great Debate' (the second half of 1971), was still an oppositional tendency within the INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS. As such we — together with a number of other IS members — argued against the anti-EEC entry line which the IS leadership took in June 1971, reversing the position held by IS from 1962 up to and including the April 1971 Conference. We stressed that "the real class struggle... is precisely... the ideological struggle against the illusions in capitalism spread around by the anti-Common Market brigade."

We argued that we should take "a very clear and principled stand first and foremost against the working class even being drawn into the debate, seeing such an involvement as in itself a victory for ruling class ideology!"

Nairn's strength is that he sees the ideological front of the class struggle, and thus recognises the reactionary nature of the anti-Common Market entry campaign. But his conclusion is that Marxists should support Common Market entry, instead of taking the "fight the bosses, in or out" line, such as was advocated by WORKERS' FIGHT.

To justify the position, he has to engage in some strange arguments. After deriding "the in-existent 'great debate'" as "an exercise in national navel-scratching" he turns around and writes "the Common Market debate... represented a considerable raising of the standard of political discussion in Great Britain... Through it the nation (who?) at least looked concretely outward again towards a new horizon (!) and away from its own soiled navel."

With more optimism than substantial verification, he writes that "The European Common Market is... a continuation of the agrarian and industrial revolutions, and a tentative successor to the increasingly anachronistic nation-states of western Europe."

Now it is possible that Marxists may be able to build gains for working class internationalism out of Common Market entry. But we will never make these gains unless, as a minimum, workers can defend themselves against the effects of entry — rising prices, job loss from rationalisations, etc. And that defence is incompatible with a blanket position in favour of entry.

And the point about the Common Market is not just that it is not socialist internationalism; it is not even (contrary to Nairn's hopes) capitalist internationalism. It may seek to integrate European capitalism, but it will not succeed. Capitalism is still nationally based. Any attempt at 'rationalising' any particular industry Europe-wide will fall apart under the demands of various national states and groups of capitalists, each wanting the biggest cut. Individual sacrifice for the common good is not usual among capitalists — and the record of the EEC from 1957 to now confirms it.

TENANTS

THE STRUGGLE GOES ON...

On November 26th, about 120 tenants and trade unionists attended a "Rents Struggle" conference called by the Greater Manchester Tenants Rents Action Group.

The most encouraging reports were from Merseyside. At Tower Hill (Kirkby), a total rent strike has been 99.9% solid since October 11th, and has strong support from local factories and building sites.

As the delegate from Tower Hill said "We know that 85% of our rent goes to the parasites who've been living on our backs since the Industrial Revolution."

Over the Bridge (Liverpool) is also on total rent and rates strike. Before the Act, tenants there had £ ¼ million arrears to their name — it's rising by thousands of pounds a week, but tenants, backed up by support from dockers, building workers, and other trade unionists, have contempt for any threats of evictions. Rent strikers have stuck their notices to quit on a board outside the Rent Office with an invitation to "join our club".

Their representative at the conference said: "Our area is bounded by the most polluted river in England, an open sewer called the Leeds and Liverpool canal, and a mass of belching chimneys — and they expect us to pay rent!"

Both Tower Hill and Over the Bridge have organised anti-eviction squads.

The majority of areas on partial rent strike on Merseyside are also largely solid, though there have been retreats over the last three or four weeks in Halewood, some areas of Kirkby, and Fazakerly.

The rebate scheme is operating and tenants are beginning to get replies to their applications, but it seems to have had little impact so far.

MANCHESTER

Tenants in Altrincham, near Manchester, demonstrated outside their Town Hall on 5th December, when the council was voting on court orders against 8 tenants. This means that if the rent is not paid within a certain period, property can be confiscated or money stopped out of wages. It is obviously a "better" tactic for councils than evictions, and can be fought only by the most determined resistance from tenants and trade unionists.

The sober fact is that the general picture is one of declining militancy, and careful reappraisal is necessary if new offensives are to be launched later. The rent strike in Altrincham is down to less than half its previous numbers; in Bolton it is virtually impossible now for the tenants' federation to keep pickets at rent offices manned; Droylsden is down from 300 to 50 strikers; Hattersley is down to 200; Ardwick and Clayton to nothing.

But the Tories and the councils still face more resistance than they know what to do with. In February, councils will be assessing 'Fair Rents'; in April, rates and in some areas rents will rise again; in October the second wave of increases under the Act will hit the working class. Meanwhile we

have wage freeze, and Value Added Tax is coming in. Where a hard core of militants can stick out and maintain tenants' association organisation, they provide a firm basis for reinvigorating the movement when repressive action is taken against tenants or rebel councillors, or when new increases come in.

POLITICAL

But political re-arming is necessary as well as organisational re-arming. With a few honourable exceptions — Clay Cross, Conisbrough, and Camden councils, Liverpool and Wandsworth trades councils, Liverpool dockers and building workers, Sheffield district engineers, mineworkers in the Rotherham area — the established labour movement has failed to lend its weight to the struggle against the Housing Finance Act. Even where support has been given, it has often been sluggish; more or less everything the Liverpool trades council has done, it has been pushed into by individual tenants.

From the beginning, Tenants Associations have limited their own struggle. They have insisted on "keeping politics out of it", saying "we're here to fight the increases, nothing more". So their appeals for industrial support are simply appeals for sympathy. No wonder if they get the reaction "we've got enough problems of our own to worry about". It is vital that we get it across that the Housing Finance Act is their problem.

It is only by seeing the Housing Finance Act as an integral part of a capitalist offensive that it can be fought effectively. One speaker at the conference, a Workers' Fight member from Bolton AUEW, pointed out that in a period of economic crisis, the capitalist class is doing its best to make the working people pay for the failure of British capitalism to maintain its profit levels. Social service cuts, redundancies, union-bashing, Housing Finance Act, all flow from this. The bosses are waging a campaign against us. We must wage a campaign against them, uniting all fronts of the struggle.

But the failure to bring out the political points extends even to the revolutionary left. The International Socialists, who continually boast that they alone can build "the socialist alternative", and who certainly do have greater resources than other groups, have confined themselves to over-optimistic reporting of the struggle and purely organisational proposals about its conduct.

They have not combatted the "no politics" trend in tenants' organisations. In fact they have endorsed it. A few weeks ago, IS members in the Manchester Tenants' Action Group helped to expel supporters of the Socialist Labour League from the Action Group. They laid responsibility for declining attendance at Action Group meetings on the League's insistence on raising political questions.

By all means, criticise the League's semi-reformist politics and its Primitive Methodist-type manner of putting them over; but as we have pointed out previously (in WF17) any disruption in the Action Group was started not by the League, but by the witchhunt against them.

NAOMI WIMBOURNE

Glasgow Corporation stands firm

On 7 December, Glasgow Corporation voted 58 to 48 to defy the ultimatum of Secretary of State for Scotland Gordon Campbell ordering them to enforce the Housing Finance Act.

The ultimatum — also issued to Falkirk, Kilcaldy, and Lanarkshire councils — follows public inquiries into these authorities. The councils are required to raise rents immediately by an average of not less than 75p per house per week.

The threat is that if the councils do not comply, then Campbell will either bring a court action or impose his own rents and rebates structure on the authorities. When it gets to that stage, the councils will have to mobilise mass direct action, rent strikes and industrial stoppages, in order to defend themselves.

16 other Scottish councils are still defying the Act, and public inquiries are to be held later this month into Midlothian, Clydebank, Kilmarnock, and Dunfermline.

JOE WRIGHT

Nottingham

Around 5 000 tenants in Nottingham are on partial rent strike, and numbers are not declining. The council has said it cannot evict anybody. A rate increase is due in January, followed by a 50p increase in April, and militants hope to bring new sections of tenants into activity against these increases.

At present leadership is sluggish because the Nottingham Federation of Tenants Associations is riddled with the same Labour councillors who are implementing the Act! Their policy is to leave it to the individual tenants to do as they wish. The tenants committee on Balloon Woods estate, however, recently decided to call a general meeting to put forward a rent strike, to give a lead and then put this forward at the Federation.

IVAN WELS.

Coventry

The main work of the Coventry Tenants Federation since October has been building up tenants' organisation, which started from al-

most nothing at that point. So far they have grown from 3 to 14 tenants' associations, and mounted a demonstration of 250 tenants.

The Labour council has done its best to damp the struggle down. They claimed that because of 'apathy' among tenants, their only course was to apply to the Tories for a 'dispensation'. They got a reduction of 50p on the October increase, but that was the end of their 'militancy'.

Joan Shortland, a councillor who persisted in voting against implementation, has had her re-selection for 1974 annulled, despite unanimous support for her in her Labour party ward. And the council's attitude to the Tenants' Federation has been to deride and belittle it.

Militants are pushing for a more active programme of preparation by the Federation for the increases due in April, and a greater stress on the political implications of the Housing Finance Act.

ROGER LITAWSKI

5,000 support Clay Cross

On 3 December, a 5 000 strong march showed the support of tenants and trade unionists from right across the country for the "no surrender" Clay Cross council.

The march ended with speeches from local councillors, from Arthur Skargill of Yorkshire NUM, and Labour Party housing spokesman Frank Allaun. Allaun was heckled when he claimed that the Labour Party had always opposed the Act.

On 1 December, Camden Borough Council joined Clay Cross and Conisbrough (Yorkshire) among the councils given an ultimatum by the Tories to implement.

On Thursday 7 December, tenants packed the Clay Cross council chamber when the district auditor met the councillors to ask them why they are defying the Housing Finance Act. He will send their answer to the Government.

Councillors David Skinner and Arthur Wellon have called on tenants to organise themselves in order to defend themselves and to support the councillors.

The tenants of Clay Cross have promised to withhold all rent if action is taken against any councillor or tenant, and Liverpool dockers are pledged to back them up.

HILARY CAVE

REDPATH DORMAN LONG

280 STRIKE AGAINST THE FREEZE

At the Redpath Dorman Long construction works, Middlesbrough, 280 boilermakers went on strike on Monday 27th November.

This was the third one day stoppage this month that the boilermakers have staged to try to get the bosses to restructure the works bonus scheme.

The union gave the company seven days notice of the decision to strike, and told them that a 24 hour strike would take place every week until the management agree to discuss the men's proposals.

Talks have been going on since last March, but in vain. The last offer, on the same day that Heath imposed the wages freeze, was "totally unacceptable", said Boilermakers Society convenor Mr Ian Clarke.

ALAN THEASBY

nus conference

NO LEFT LEAD

THE MARGATE CONFERENCE of the National Union of Students voted to campaign, next term, for rent strikes for higher grants. Additional demands will be:

- * an end to discretionary grants
- * an end to discrimination against married women students
- * a new system of awarding grants.

This campaign follows on a number of rent strikes this term against increased fees in halls of residence. But one thing must be remembered: "concrete" economic issues have never been very successful in sustaining really serious student struggles. Unless there is some overall political direction and drive, rent strikes are likely to dwindle into isolated demoralisation. And students living in halls of residence are, after all, often the more conservative sections of the student body.

Militants in the conference clearly did not have much confidence in the Communist Party-led Executive's ability to take a principled stand on actual struggles, let alone to give an adequate political lead. Union president Digby Jacks started the conference off in fine style by calling for full support for those on disciplinary charges at Stirling University — and then condemning their demonstration as being "bad for publicity"!

An emergency resolution on Sterling later censured Jacks for his opening remarks; and Sterling's President (herself no revolutionary accused him of "lining up with the Tories, the establishment press and big business" in attacking Sterling students.

"COMMUNITY INTERESTS"

The Executive reports on the disputes at North London Poly, Swansea College of Education, and Magee college were "referred back," the Conference deciding that the executive had not given sufficient support.

The political poverty of the Executive was further shown by their resolution on student representation, which called for "non-academic community interests", including capitalist interests, to be represented in college government, and said "there must be a degree of public accountability". But "public accountability", in capitalist society, can only mean accountability to capitalism.

A great deal of support could have been won for a coherent revolutionary socialist alternative. But the left was fragmented. The International Socialists had previously (in September) split the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions, which made a successful intervention earlier this year at the Birmingham conference. Now they walked out of the left unity meeting called by the International Marxist Group on the basis that "with their strength they didn't see any reason for unity".

On the question of the wage freeze, there was a reformist motion, calling for the NUS bureau-

next paper

On account of the Christmas holiday period, the next issue of **WORKERS' FIGHT** will be published on January 6th 1973.

cracy to get together with the Trade Union and Labour Party bureaucracies to pressure the Tories, and a revolutionary motion, backed by Workers' Fight and the IMG, supporting direct industrial action. There was also a motion tabled by LSE on behalf of IS, which proposed that the conference call on the next Labour government to: "(a) repeal the Industrial Relations Act; (b) repeal the Housing Finance Act; (c) end unemployment"

Just what is meant by "end unemployment"? A return to the post-war capitalist boom, perhaps? A "high-wage, high-productivity" economy? The Labour Party to smash capitalism? No wonder that in the compositing meeting the LSE delegate voted to have the reformist motion round which to hinge his amendment, rather than the revolutionary motion.

Luckily for IS, the wage freeze debate never reached the conference floor.

ROBIN CROSKERY

EBBW VALE :

one Foot in...

In the steelworks which is the major industry of Ebbw Vale, the British Steel Corporation plans to bring in drastic cuts leading to a 50% cut in the workforce.

On 25 November, the Ebbw Vale Labour Party called a public meeting attended by 150 people, mostly steelworkers and their wives.

For Ebbw Vale steelworkers, their right to a livelihood must come before BSC's "viability". Only an irrational system can justify wastage of men's skills and hardship to their families on the grounds of the "need" to make it profitable.

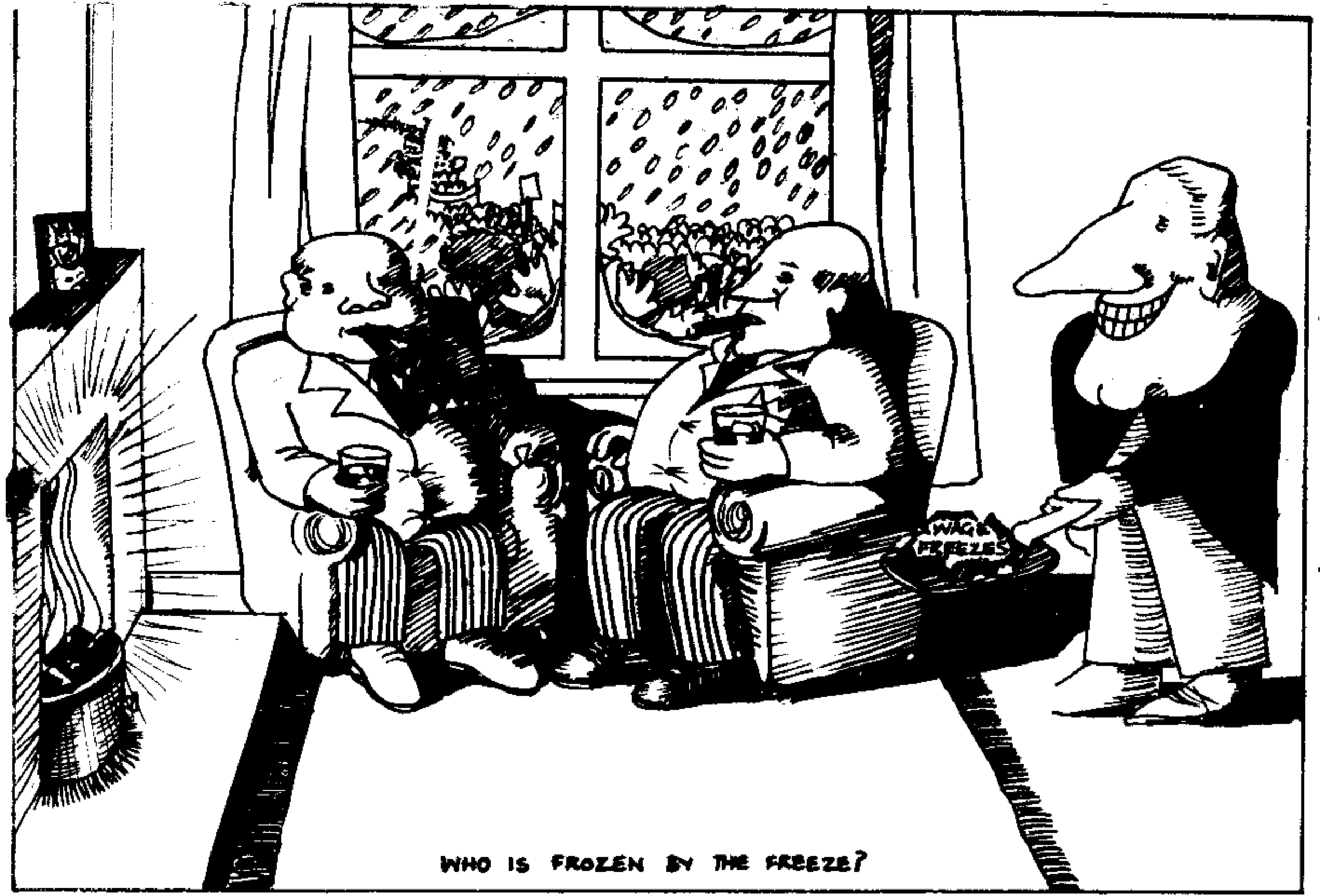
A scrutiny committee of workers' representatives has been agreed on, to look into "viability". But it is vital to insist that this committee looks into the whole of BSC's affairs, its connections with banks and the sums paid off to former owners, in order to expose the way it operates.

That is what is needed. A clear line of **no redundancies**, coupled with a call for a national action committee to link the fight of steelworkers at Ebbw Vale with other workers, for example at Stanton.

What did the meeting hear from Labour left hero Michael Foot? The scrutiny committee should "look into" keeping South End works open and "closure dates if necessary". The number of jobs in steel "will have to go down". The point is to **persuade** BSC — for Lord Melchett is a "honest man". There are "no guarantees" of what a Labour government would do. He is "not sure" if an action committee would be "a good idea".

Militant steelworkers must press Foot and the Labour Party to change their stand on these points — and if the Labour Party will not budge, then they must act independently, in coordination with steelworkers in other parts of the country.

Simon Temple.



from page 11

COMMON MARKET DEBATE

Thus support for Common Market entry is in no sense progressive. It cannot promote working class internationalism, only a bland, Wilsonite "white-hot technological revolution" Europe-centred cosmopolitanism.

The weakness of Nairn's analysis is that it centres almost entirely on the ideological aspects of Common Market entry, dealing with the more basic economic factors only sketchily and in passing. (His general failure of method also results in a complete misunderstanding of the Marxist analysis of the Labour Party).

Nairn criticises the internationalist propaganda of the IS and IMG as "the purely theoretical and idealist 'third way' of the European socialist future — by a spiritual transcendence, so to speak, whose prime feature and definition is polar opposition to the material reality creeping so dismally into existence at the hands of President Pompidou, Mr Heath, Prime Minister Werner, and the rest".

From p.1

ASIANS STRIKE

Into every factory, into every trade union and, above all, into the Labour Party, to eradicate this disease of racism.

Where a section of bosses stands exposed for having set up a Northern Ireland-type division within a factory in England (though it is by no means a rare exception) the labour movement must react as to a mortal threat. A working class divided against itself, as in Northern Ireland, is fair game for the bosses.

Union branches throughout the country must declare full solidarity with the strikers, and condemn the racist union officials: **THIS IS NO ORDINARY STRIKE.**

The strikers should not be left alone to defend themselves against fascists and scabs. Joint multi-racial and multi-union pickets must be organised to smash the scabs and the fascist interlopers who are now converging on Loughborough and Leicester, organising demonstrations and racist provocations.

When white scabs fight migrant workers on strike it is necessary to take sides openly with the strikers. The whole British labour movement must declare that these Asian-born strikers are our people — not the English bosses and their scabs.

Class conscious workers will take responsibility for defending and aiding the Loughborough strikers, whose struggle is within the great tradition of British and international trade unionism.

Financial aid and resolutions of support should be sent to: Mr. Naik, 31 Station Road, Loughborough.

The IS/IMG internationalist propaganda was indeed 'abstract' — precisely because it was disjointed from and even in opposition to their main agitational emphasis. With one voice they cried: No to entry!

The Treaty of Rome is a class issue; we and the working class are against the Treaty of Rome; we must form a united front with the Tribunites and the Communist Party on this class issue, at least to the point of voting with them. And with another voice they lecture us, that staying out is no alternative, and that the Tribune/CP line reflects only the interests of backward capitalists!

But a consistent programme of condemnation of the whole 'Great Debate', of fighting the effects of entry, of international working class unity both organisationally and politically — that is 'abstract' or 'abstentionist' only from the point of view of bourgeois politics. From the point of view of working class activity it is entirely concrete and positive. John Sterling.

LIVERPOOL: solidarity march for CAV sit-in

On Saturday 2nd December, trade unionists in Liverpool demonstrated their support for the workers occupying the CAV-Lucas factory at Fazakerly. The march, of about 500 workers, was to begin to draw all workers on Merseyside into the fight against the 1200 redundancies at CAV.

The work from CAV is being transferred elsewhere, and, far from being on their knees, Lucas announced profits of £21.5 million for the year, a 25% return over last year's returns. On hearing of the bosses' plans, the workers at CAV decided to occupy the factory and the strike is still solid nine weeks later.

The march passed through the city centre to rally at the Pierhead. On the march were other workers engaged in struggles — the electricians from the Inland Revenue Office strike in Bootle, AUEW members from the Extrusion Machine Co, Runcorn — and a contingent from Fisher Bendix.

And as the march moved through the crowded streets of shoppers towards the Pierhead, it picked up supporters on the way.

The rally was addressed by Dave Martin, AUEW convenor at CAV, who emphasised support by donations, and also by a black on all Lucas goods. If the workers in Fazakerly are not to join the 60 000 already on the dole on Merseyside, this sort of support is absolutely necessary — with it they can win.

Neal Smith.